

Screen



Emilie Altenloh, *A Sociology of the Cinema*

The Boys Don't Cry debate, continued

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Congratulations to Connie Balides, whose essay, 'Jurassic post-Fordism: tall tales of economics in the theme park', *Screen*, vol. 41, no. 2, received an Honourable Mention in the Society for Cinema Studies Katharine Singer Kovacs Essay Awards.

The special debate on 'Trauma and Screen Studies' in *Screen*, vol. 42, no. 2 was compiled and edited by Susannah Radstone in collaboration with *Screen* editors.

cover illustration

Luisen-Kino, one of the first cinemas in Berlin
Photographer: Otto Haeckel, 1910
Picture courtesy: Archiv für Kunst und Geschichte

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Editorial

Screen is delighted to publish in this special issue a translation of a text hitherto unavailable in English – part of Emilie Altenloh's groundbreaking 1914 study *Zur Soziologie des Kino* (*A Sociology of the Cinema*). Until Miriam Hansen drew attention to it in the 1980s, in an essay on early silent cinema in Germany, *Zur Soziologie des Kino* remained virtually unknown to Anglophone film scholarship.¹ It has since come to be feted as *the* outstanding contemporary study of early German cinema audiences and an early model for the ethnographic study of the cinema audience.²

Based on a questionnaire and interview survey of some 2400 filmgoers in the medium-sized industrial town of Mannheim during 1912 and 1913, Altenloh's minutely detailed empirical engagement with audiences stands out against the reformist and apologist rhetoric which characterizes the bulk of German writing on cinema from this period. While such writing typically constructs the audience as a monolithic – and somewhat regrettable – by-product of mass society, Altenloh categorizes and discusses audience members, their consumption patterns and their film preferences according to a range of social and demographic characteristics. Consequently, her heterogeneous model of film reception can find easy purchase within current research informed by sociology, cultural studies and the 'new historicism'.

Zur Soziologie des Kino was researched and written as a doctoral thesis at the University of Heidelberg, where Altenloh (1888–1985) was supervised by the sociologist Alfred Weber. An extraordinarily original piece of work, it was, and remains, a pioneering contribution to the economic and sociological study of cinema. In its original published form, *Zur Soziologie des Kino* runs to a hundred pages, and comprises two sections of roughly equal length, of which the second – on audiences and reception – appears in translation here.

- 1 Miriam Hansen 'Early silent cinema: whose public sphere?' *New German Critique* no. 29 (1983) pp. 147–84.
- 2 Recent references to Altenloh include: Patrice Petro *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Cinema* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Veronika Rall *Emilie Altenloh* in Annette Kuhn (ed.) *The Women's Companion to International Film* (London: Virago Press, 1990) pp. 11–12; Sabine Hake *The Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany, 1907–1933* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Jostein Gripsrud 'Film audiences' in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.) *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) pp. 202–11.

In the first section, Altenloh addresses the production side of cinema. After a brief introductory history of the film medium, which covers technological developments from Lumière on, the emergence of various national cinemas, genres and markets is looked at. This historical account is interesting for the internationalism of its perspective, as indeed are the subsequent discussions of the film industry, of exhibition, and of cinema architecture. Within the context of a broader narrative of economic development and industrial concentration in the years up to 1913, the first section of *Zur Soziologie des Kino* concludes with an account of the gradual consolidation of key film genres, the emergence of a star system, and various legal attempts – largely through censorship – to rein in a new medium which was widely regarded as encroaching on earlier and more ‘respectable’ forms of art and entertainment. Here, too, the point is made that cinema is not simply, as contemporary conservative critics vociferously maintained, a working-class entertainment. If this material yields little substantively new information for today’s historian of early cinema, it is of value in laying the foundations for the groundbreaking investigation of the cinema audience which follows in the book’s second section.

For example, in the course of the first section’s discussion of the increasingly detailed division of labour and massification attendant upon the rise of industrial capitalism, Altenloh introduces the theme of modernity. This theme, crucial to what a recent commentator has called Altenloh’s ‘first theory of spectatorship in the cinema’,³ is outlined in the book’s second section, in which it is argued that cinema’s popularity must be understood as part of a series of broader shifts in contemporary social and industrial organization. Altenloh writes, for instance, about the ways in which cinema seems to appeal to audiences seeking to escape the monotony of new forms of industrial labour; similarly, she sets out an analysis of the decline of popular theatre, presenting this medium as incompatible with modern modes of experiencing the world, and arguing that cinema has an elective affinity with modernity’s kaleidoscopic diversity of experience.

Patterns of reception and consumption of films, too, are placed within the context of a broader sociology of culture. An introduction surveying the project’s statistical findings (on such issues as frequency of cinema attendance, costs of admission, popularity of different genres, and so on) is followed by detailed accounts of patterns of taste among a wide range of social groups. The study is particularly illuminating by virtue of its close attention to distinctions of class, gender, generation, locality (urban vs rural), and employment status (apprentice, wage labourer, artisan, and so on). For each social group, Altenloh paints a portrait of cinemagoing habits, always considered within the broader context of the group’s leisure patterns. The study concludes with an appeal for the

3 Hake, *The Cinema’s Third Machine* p. 46.

popularity of the new medium of cinema to be recognized as part of wider cultural shifts in twentieth-century modernity

But Altenloh was by no means an out-and-out advocate on behalf of cinema her stance in fact emerges as somewhat ambivalent. While keen to describe, and to offer explanations for, the medium's popularity, she also advances the arguments of the 'reformists' (*Kinoreformbewegung*), adding her voice to their call for constraints on the medium, and striving to redefine it in terms of high culture. Vacillating between embrace of, and detachment from, her object of study, Altenloh's reform-minded interventions seem to be informed by the values of her own bourgeois background. Read today, they sometimes get in the way of her central quest to engage with the ordinary cinemagoer's experience.

Today, *Zur Soziologie des Kino* may be usefully approached in two ways in terms of its contribution to understanding the emergence of cinema as a sociocultural phenomenon, and for its value to present-day studies of audiences for film and other popular media. It is undeniably illuminating to read the book as a contribution to early twentieth-century German sociology, with its focus on industrialization, modernization and the growth of the city and its attendant worldview,⁴ and indeed, with its emphasis on the machine, as a piece of cultural commentary very characteristic of its period. It also offers an illuminating comparison between public debates on cinema in Germany and elsewhere in the world, and sheds light on the peculiarities of the German situation. For example, academic studies of the cinema audience did not appear in the USA and the UK until the 1930s, and even these were motivated predominantly by worries about cinema's potentially harmful effects on the minds of its audiences, children in particular.⁵

Altenloh's work, too, highlights the differences between various national debates on the early cinema audience in the USA, for example, the focus was on the democratic and integrative aspects of cinema, while in Britain the emphasis was on the medium's potentially detrimental effect on the morale of the working class.⁶ Altenloh's study, by contrast, highlights the role of the female audience at this period, documents the early push towards embourgeoisement of the medium, and counsels against regarding the cinema audience as a homogeneous mass. As Martin Loiperdinger points out, *Zur Soziologie des Kino* shows that 'the most significant feature of the cinema-going public before World War I was not its proletarian origins . . . but its class and gender diversity'.⁷

The substantive concerns and methods of *Zur Soziologie des Kino* are also of considerable pertinence to the study of film and other popular media today. As Patrice Petro observes, 'Notwithstanding its empirical approach, Altenloh's study takes up issues that remain remarkably up-to-date, and many of her conclusions seem directly applicable to current developments in film studies'.⁸ Besides standing

4 See, for example Georg Simmel's 1903 essay 'The metropolis and mental life' in K. Wolff (ed.) *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press 1950) pp. 409–24.

5 E. Wight Bakke *The Unemployed Man: a Social Study* (London: Nisbet and Co. 1933); Richard Ford, *Children in the Cinema* (London: Allen & Unwin 1939); Henry James Forman *Our Movie-Made Children* (New York: MacMillan 1933). It is significant that Britain's earliest exponent of the sociology of cinema was a German emigre, J.P. Mayer, author of *British Cinemas and their Audiences: Sociological Studies* (London: Dennis Dobson 1948) and *Sociology of Film: Studies and Documents* (London: Faber and Faber 1946).

6 Frank Kessler and Eva Warth 'Early cinema and its audiences' in Tim Bergfelder, Erica Carter and Deniz Gokturk (eds) *The German Cinema Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2002); National Council of Public Morals *The Cinema: its Present Position and Future Possibilities* (London: Williams and Norgate 1917).

7 Quoted in Kessler and Warth, 'Early cinema and its audiences'.

8 Petro *Joyless Streets* pp. 3–4.

as a contribution to the historical study of film reception and to cultural and sociological studies of the consumption and use of popular media forms, *Zur Soziologie des Kino* offers a methodological template for the sort of ethnographic study of media audiences which is being reinvented today for in attempting to understand the appeal of cinema, Altenloh's investigation aligns itself in spirit with the ethnographer's quest – in this case, to document cinema audiences' experiences from the inside

For various forms of assistance in the production of this issue many thanks are due to Erica Carter Robert Kiss and Ginette Vincendeau

A Sociology of the Cinema: the Audience

EMILIE ALTENLOH

Methodology: data collection

The observations set out below have been gleaned with reference to specially conducted surveys. This study draws on statistics indicating the frequency of cinema visits in a fairly large industrial town during two months in the summer and two in the winter. These statistics were kindly made available by four theatre owners, and the similarity of their results made it possible to get an idea of the significance of cinemas in general. In addition, these sources were underpinned by a survey, undertaken in the same town, whose aim was to establish the connections between social grouping, entertainment and cultural interests.¹ In order to ascertain the nature of people's interest in the cinema, the following questions were asked, some of which were answered verbally and some by filling out a questionnaire:

¹ Parallel to a survey about the level of interest in fine arts (by Miss Else Biram). Conducting these two surveys in tandem made it possible to derive a more comprehensive portrait of the respondents.

- 1 a) Name or sex (of respondent)
- b) Occupation:
- c) Father's occupation
- d) How old are you?
- e) Where were you born?
- f) Which school do/did you attend?
- 2 Do you go to the theatre, public lectures, concerts, variety shows?
- 3 What do you enjoy best?
- 4 Do you go to the cinema? How often?
- 5 On your own or with other people?

- 6 What prompts you to go to the cinema on each occasion?
- 7 When do you usually go to the cinema (day of week, time of day)?
- 8 Do you stay for the whole programme?
- 9 What kind of films do you like best (dramas, comedies, nature documentaries etc)?
- 10 Has anything made a lasting impression on you? What?
- 11 Has the cinema offered you any artistic insights?

A total of 2400 responses were obtained. This was achieved by contacting the committees of various trade associations, as the aim was to include as large a percentage as possible from each social group. Some committees then put us in contact with individual members of their associations. Young people (fourteen-to-eighteen-year-olds) were surveyed in vocational and trade schools, while workers were surveyed in person. The remaining occupations – artisans, clerical workers, engineers, students, officers, and so on – were sent the forms exclusively through their trade associations or specialist publications. This yielded little success: out of a total of 15,000 forms distributed, only about 200 were returned. With these groups, information had to be gathered in a different way, and personal impressions were incorporated to a greater extent than elsewhere in characterizing relationship to the cinema.

Generally speaking, for this latter group it can be assumed that judging the level of interest in cinema showings and the frequency of cinema visits solely on the basis of the completed questionnaires would be misleading. Among those surveyed through the trade associations, those who never went to the cinema generally put the form to one side with no further thought, so that almost no forms were received from non-cinemagoers. This assumption is further strengthened by comments to this effect made by members of the associations surveyed. Numerical comparisons between the trades and other social groups are therefore impossible. In the case of labourers, however, as well as all the women surveyed, the results are more complete and allow for an internal comparison. Answers were obtained in each case from all the members of the groups gathered specifically for the survey, enabling conclusions to be formed about the group as a whole. A similar situation holds for the results from the elementary schools, further education schools and trade schools, where all individuals in particular classes were included in the survey.

Most comprehensive, finally, are the results from one commercial further education school, gained by surveying all fifty-five classes with a total of 1381 pupils of both sexes. Attendance at this school is compulsory for all male and female apprentices of commercial trades. The school is organized on the basis of a three-year attendance period, so that the first class is attended mainly by fourteen-to-fifteen-year-olds, the second mainly by fifteen-to-sixteen-

year-olds and the third by sixteen-to-seventeen-year-olds. In addition there are special classes for those who have obtained their one-year certificate from a middle school. This section of the survey includes all young people of a particular sort, categorized according to age. Due to the completeness of this part of the survey, analysis in this case will include a more detailed discussion of particularities and deviations from the overall picture, since these may be seen not as coincidental failings of the sample surveys but can be numerically adjusted, and assessed for their significance. Given the great expansion of trade in the town selected, all young entrants to the major occupations have been included. This is especially useful for cinema statistics because more money is generally spent on entertainment – and on the cinema in particular – during the years between when a young person starts to bring in a wage and when they get married than is spent later, something that is especially true in the case of young shop assistants. This is clearly demonstrated when this group is compared with members of other occupational classes (even if no account is taken of the fact that, of these latter, only those who show most interest in the cinema are included in the survey).

Cinema and other forms of entertainment

In order to be able to assess how significant cinema is for a town's population, it is crucial to ascertain whether it represents the only – or virtually the only – means of entertainment available, or whether other pastimes occupy the audience's time and capture their attention. There therefore follows a brief overview of other forms of entertainment in Mannheim, such as theatre and concerts.

Until 1908 there were no independent cinemas in Mannheim. People's desire for spectacle was satisfied by the *Hoftheater*, or court theatre, a second larger theatre and three speciality theatres. Occasionally, at a fair or some other popular festival, a travelling picture-show might exhibit the odd film, usually of a fairly poor technical standard. For the less well-off classes the court theatre was hardly an option – and indeed less so than today, when popular theatre productions with cheap seats provide at least a thinly spun thread between the theatre and those in the lower social classes who are particularly interested in it. General trends in the development of the modern stage suggest a further reason why most of the population has become alienated from the theatre. These trends are a result of the social divisions that have arisen alongside the contemporary organization of economic life. Most people are integrated into the overall economic system like a small cog in a machine, and this system not only dominates people's working lives but also constrains the totality of the individual. The free, inviolable

sphere within which a person has sovereign control has been reduced to a minimum. This kind of life produces individuals defined primarily through the work they do, who find it very difficult to look for new avenues of development outside the sphere of life in which they find themselves. The ways in which people from different social groups seek to be entertained and have fun display certain characteristic features, and there is little understanding of what goes on outside one's own circles, let alone a sense of working together or of communal enjoyment.

In contrast to this highly constrained group is a comparatively small elite whose more favourable external circumstances have allowed them to retain a greater degree of inner freedom. These people are far removed from the majority in their whole way of feeling and thinking. For them, such manifestations of intellectual life as books and works of art do not remain external objects. Instead, they draw them into themselves and render them a living and integral part of their personality. It is through this continual assimilation that the elite become bearers of the entire culture, and in turn determine its content.

This one-sided development is especially clearly revealed in modern theatre, whose entire repertoire can be divided into three groups. Firstly, there is modern drama, in which all the action is transferred onto the protagonists' inner life. The drama lies in the processes of highlighting and solving purely psychological conflicts. Nowadays this type of drama is cultivated at the best theatres, which have almost the character of private gatherings. It is here that members of this intellectual elite seek intellectual nourishment. With their more finely-tuned emotional life, they alone are in a position to understand the playwright. Alongside these are the *classical* dramas². However, since the average person today is rooted more than ever in the present and has proper understanding only of contemporary problems and issues, he is less drawn, purely in terms of human sensibility, to things classical, and indeed often lacks the level of understanding required for forming a judgement from an artistic point of view, since this is only possible with a certain cultivation of taste. The third type is opera, which has numerous adherents from all social circles and constitutes the very essence of theatre for broad sections of the population today. Modern comedies and operettas in particular continue to attract large audiences, and have been staged in Mannheim from time to time over the past few years in response to an urgent need for light entertainment. Most of the big concerts of the season take place in the three auditoria of the town's concert building. Variety shows and cinemas, of course, also provide entertainment. What is more, they draw away from the theatre all those whose principal concern is to spend a few hours being entertained. Finally, the various cycles of lecture series should be mentioned, which on different evenings of the week during the

² Classical dramas are usually performed at showings for school pupils or at cheap popular showings and as such are the only ones accessible to less well-off groups. They seem to be mentioned fairly often for this reason rather than because they correspond to prevailing tastes.

winter are a source of fascination for some sections of the population, and might therefore have the effect of diverting them from the cinema.

This was the situation regarding pleasure and entertainment facilities in the town when the cinema movement entered dramatically onto the scene in 1908. Although emanating from the urban centres, cinema also made its presence felt in provincial towns. In both locations, the same process occurred: first the audience's attention was diverted from similar entertainment forms, variety shows and cabarets. But new options awaken new needs, and thus the number of cinemas has grown far beyond the number of cognate establishments. The trend in Berlin typifies this, where in addition to the thirty-four variety theatres that existed in 1908, another 300 cinemas have since sprung up. Typically, this trend did not emerge immediately after the new invention became well known, but only when *Sensationsdrama*, or sensational drama, brought a radical change to film representation and when the picture houses were transformed from dimly-lit, confined spaces into luxurious and comfortably furnished buildings. These two factors have proved decisive for the role played by the cinema today. From that point onwards in its development, cinema won over ever more elevated social groups and became, as it were, 'presentable'. At first, cinemagoers travelled incognito, and were actually somewhat embarrassed if their predilection became public knowledge. Times have moved on, for today a screening of *Der Andere/The Other*, with Albert Bassermann in the leading role, constitutes a society event. The modern city-dweller nowadays considers the phenomenon of cinema as something perfectly natural, and an occasional visit to the cinema is just as much a part of life as taking afternoon tea at five on the Kurfürstendamm.

The same development has been repeated on a smaller scale in provincial towns, including Mannheim. As has already been noted, two out of three variety theatres have disappeared, one of these was converted to a cinema, and eleven additional cinemas were built from scratch. Five of these are located in the town centre and seven more around the edge of town. Most of them have only come into existence during the past three years. Their location is also a key feature. Until 1910 only four movie theatres existed in the town centre and one in the town's suburbs. At that time there was as yet no appreciable difference between them. In terms of both their external appearance and the content of their screenings, they were all tailored to the most primitive expectations. Accordingly, the audience was almost exclusively recruited from the lower social groups. Then the cinemas began to spread rapidly. In Mannheim this involved three new cinemas being opened in 1910 and three more in 1911. These theatres are by no means all located in the town centre, but rather in those parts of town where the largest section of the

contemporary cinema audience lives, namely the labourers. At the same time, two film theatres in the town centre began to differentiate themselves by the more elegant design of their auditoria, the introduction of more expensive seats, and by employing a small ensemble of musicians instead of an orchestra or solo piano player. The location and interior design of movie theatres, then, as well as the ticket price, are more significant in determining the composition of the audience than the quality of what is being shown. Hence the opening in 1912 of a competitor establishment, the third of this more luxurious group.

The same phenomenon that had occurred some years earlier in Berlin was now being repeated here. cinema became a fashion, indeed different social circles became actively involved in supporting and promoting it. A demonstration screening was organized by the *Verein der Künstler und Kunstfreunde* (Association of Artists and Friends of the Arts), in which the peculiar pictorial effects made possible through cinematography were shown, using extracts from various films as examples. These illustrations did not provide a model for producing good film programmes so much as an education in an artistic way of viewing: the emphasis was not on the material content of the film but solely on the effect of individual images and movements. In practice only very few film directors have as yet shown any interest in achieving an image in which the succession of moving bodies forms a continuous whole with the background of a scene in order to create a harmonious aesthetic impression. In film, however, when such an impression is achieved, all attention becomes focused solely on film's potential as a series of images, with action and plot neglected. Thus a degree of perfection is achieved, but only ever in one aspect of film presentation.

Similarly, and despite all efforts, there has never existed, even in theory, the movie theatre with a perfect programme. Any judgments that might be made concerning the excellence or quality of any given enterprise can therefore be of only limited significance. The three town centre theatres mentioned above, which incidentally are owned by rather large theatre chains, in contrast to the private enterprises of the suburbs, differ from the smaller ones mainly in terms of their external appearance. At least the worst excesses have been eradicated from the programme, partly out of consideration for the reputation of the enterprise, and in their place nature documentaries have come to constitute a somewhat larger part of the repertoire.

The remaining cinemas, usually situated at various locations in the suburbs, differ from one another in only a few minor respects, the most important being the quality of ventilation in the auditoria. They offer everything that those seeking horror and sensationalism could possibly want, and appeal to the type of person vilified in many quarters as pernicious and lacking in taste. Loud, garish posters with sensational titles, often specially altered to appeal to a particularly

3 The law does not permit films to be given a completely new title. Poster designers will generally select something from the usually numerous subtitles that they hope will have the greatest impact for the area in question and which they will put in large lettering at the top of the programme.

4 According to more precise research carried out in other towns and based on ticket taxes this figure seems much too high. Cf. Franz Bergmann, *Gemeinde und Kino/Local Communities and Cinema*. According to this source, there are between six to eight cinema visits per year for every individual in a number of towns; on the basis of the figures cited here there are thirteen.

5 The curve for Heidelberg cinemas is the same shape as that for Mannheim.

unshockable audience,³ cover entire facades. Just how low the level is and what kind of visitor is expected is best summed up by the following notice in one of the auditoria: 'Wrecking of chairs and benches is prohibited'. Anyone who has ever strolled through the suburbs knows this kind of den. Each is no better and no worse than the other and is, in the end, always tailored to the needs of audiences who remain shockingly indifferent to, and uncritical of, the entertainment they enjoy, as long as what they are watching does not require any intellectual effort.

Taken together, the twelve cinemas [in Mannheim] offer about 4500 seats for a population of around 204,000. A certain degree of saturation appears to have been reached with this figure, and further theatre openings would be unlikely to be profitable. The proportion of cinemas to inhabitants is similar in a number of other industrial towns. But cinemas have already achieved such widespread popularity that all other forms of entertainment lag far behind. One cinema (albeit one of the largest) has as many visitors every evening as the court theatre. Based on an estimated number of seats and on statistics from all the different theatres, it can be concluded that around 7500 people go to the cinema every evening.⁴ By contrast, even when all the other entertainment establishments are counted together and when, for example, several events are taking place at the same time, audience figures still do not equate with those for cinema.

The number of cinemagoers on particular days of the week seems to be subject to certain regularities. This is clearly demonstrated by a curve whose shape varies according to whether the cinema is located in the centre or in working-class areas of town. In the case of the former, the minimum frequency falls with greatest regularity on a Friday.⁵ The reason for this is not immediately apparent. Perhaps we need to postulate a psychology of the different days of the week in order to explain it. Fridays represent a kind of preparation, a time of waiting for events that will occur on the free Saturday afternoon and Sunday, which are usually devoted exclusively to the pursuit of pleasure. Fridays have always been largely devoted to work, perhaps precisely in order to increase the sense of anticipation for the coming days of rest. Saturday itself, on the other hand, is almost already a part of Sunday, especially since the introduction of earlier closing times. One practical reason could also be the fact that Friday has traditionally been cleaning day in multi-roomed apartments, when the women of the petite bourgeoisie and middle classes are busy with domestic duties: these women make up a large proportion of the cinema audience, especially in the film theatres under consideration here.

The curve for the frequency of cinema attendance in the suburbs shows that the minimum falls on Thursdays, when money has probably already become a little tight, whereas on Friday, pay day,

the frequency picks up again. The majority of visitors to these cinemas are labourers, that is, people who have to manage with limited means and who have usually spent their weekly wage by Thursday. For the majority, however, going to the cinema seems to be *the* Sunday outing. For those who are busy at work during the week, going to the cinema is the only time when they are completely freed from the daily grind. All other forms of entertainment are more expensive (for instance, the theatre) or more difficult to arrange (as is the case with daytrips). But picture houses can be found in every part of town. So on Sundays all the cinemas are reserved for those sections of the audience who only have time to go on that day. Moreover, both the suburban establishments and the bourgeois cinemas in the town centre show a three- to fourfold increase in audience numbers on Sundays compared with weekdays. After all, everyone likes to be seen out in their Sunday best, so people will happily pay a little extra for the greater comfort provided by the better theatres. On the remaining days of the week, cinema attendance manifests fewer but also fairly regular fluctuations.⁶

⁶ The prohibition enacted in the summer of 1912 regarding visits to the cinema by young people encouraged various owners to introduce special children's screenings on so-called school-free afternoons, in order to compensate for the loss of business entailed by this measure. It is because of this that the curve rises very steeply for example on Wednesdays, whereas it shows the opposite trend if one takes account of adult visitors alone.

The relationship between day of the week and cinema attendance is the only factor that has a consistent impact on the shape of the curve. No other factor seems capable of disrupting this regular cinema attendance: not the weather, nor well-attended events happening at the same time in the theatre or the Rosengarten, nor even the festival weeks of 1 to 12 May or special entertainment programmes. At most these circumstances have the effect of increasing or reducing the level of cinema attendance in one instance or another within the frequency shown on each day of the week. This is true first and foremost for particular programmes. But it is only in isolated instances that any of the above influences can be identified at all. In the absence of any other decisive factors the likely reason why extraordinarily large numbers of people go to the cinema on some days may be rainy weather. Boredom and inactivity soon set in, and for many that is just the right mood for a trip to the cinema. What also emerges from the questionnaires is that bad weather in itself can be a reason for going to the cinema. But those who are thus motivated do not constitute the majority. Even if the odd rainy day does not always mean a particular increase in cinemagoing, business does fall off greatly during the summer months, which explains the large number of bankruptcies during the warm season.

It is easy to see why the theatre and concerts do not exert much influence on attendance figures when one considers that two cinema establishments alone have, almost without exception, more visitors daily than the court theatre and the Rosengarten put together – and there are twelve cinemas in town. Generally speaking, a person will rarely have any trouble choosing between the theatre or the cinema, because each suits a completely different mood. This is even more

true where concerts are concerned; thus these too exert no diversionary influence. For example, within a given two-month period, the greatest number of cinema visits occurred at the same time as three well-attended concerts in the Rosengarten. Public lectures on science pose still less of a challenge to the cinemas. The obvious inference is that the cinema audience is recruited from different circles than the audience for other events. Where individuals are strongly influenced by a lively interest in things musical or scientific, the lure of cinema seems to be less enticing. But wherein lies the great attraction that still guarantees it a sizeable following? By what means has cinema gained an audience that at one time was completely indifferent to any kind of artistic representation? Let it be remembered that one cannot watch a film drama while sitting at a table drinking beer, for example, as one can a variety number, or as one might elsewhere enjoy the 'Indian Nightingales' or some peasant band from the Schliersee as background entertainment. And how does the cinema win for itself an ever-increasing audience from among the educated classes?

We shall first consider some general reasons for the above before going on to consider films which have proven particularly appealing to audiences. Whenever the question is raised as to why cinemagoing is on the increase, the answer usually given is, 'The admission price is low, and you can go anytime without making any special preparations'. The strongly sensual nature of most films, intensified by the accompanying music as well as the darkness of the cinema auditorium, is also emphasized as exerting appeal. This certainly represents part of cinema's mysterious power of attraction. But these factors can only have an effect when they act in concert with many other causes, products of the general character of our times which influence the audience in particular ways.

The low admission charge certainly plays an important role. For someone of modest means there is, after all, a difference between spending seventy-five pfennigs on the most uncomfortable seat in the theatre and occupying a box in the cinema for considerably less. However, as the questionnaires show, almost one third of cinemagoers, including those from less well-off social groups, go to the cinema once or even several times a week, and therefore spend just as much money on entertainment as they would on a once or twice-monthly trip to the theatre, a fact that substantially undermines this line of argument. The second reason holds more water: namely, the fact that going to the cinema is possible at any time one chooses.⁷ What seems to me more crucial, however, is that both the cinema and those who visit it are typical products of our times, characterized by constant preoccupation and a state of nervous restlessness. Those who are constantly on the go at work during the day cannot even free themselves from this haste when they want to relax. As they pass the cinema they will go in to seek some

7 This is also valid to only a limited extent: for most experts assure us that prevailing tastes are directed towards dramas that are long and only played once an evening at a particular starting time.

distraction for a short period of time and, as they do so, will already be half thinking of how they might fill the next few hours. In order to connect with a work of art, whether it be drama, a piece of music or a painting, a certain amount of time and leisure is required, as is a focusing of the mind. Cinema does not demand such concentration. It creates such powerful effects that even shattered nerves can be stirred to life, and the rapid succession of events, the jumble of the most varied kinds of things, allow no room for boredom.

But it is not only the fast-paced, overwhelming form of cinema (which is indeed its very element) that satisfies so completely the needs of a broad mass of people: the *content* of cinematic representations also does this. The fact that erotic films and films about criminals attract such large audiences is utterly explicable: surely these films are the only ones that can strike a chord among the mass of people whose intellectual life is often in deep slumber and who have nothing in common with each another, at least as far as more elevated matters are concerned. As Heine wrote of that mode of understanding that is founded on the common basis of inferior emotions, 'Rarely have you understood me, rarely too have I understood you, but whenever we found ourselves in the mire, we understood one another straight away!'

Alongside these particular attractions there is another possible reason for cinema's great popularity. Cinema drama has stepped in where theatrical literature has left a gap. Nowadays, dramas are not at all popular and yet they are exactly what a large part of the audience is looking for and appears to have found in the cinemas. Plenty of action, lively changes of scene: these are the main characteristics of cinema drama, and those who seek such excitement come here at their own expense. The particular suitability of cinematic technique has placed cinema drama on this path and earned it its popularity. Objection might be raised at this point that historical and classical theatre dramas are just as rich in observable action. This is why they are still the most popular, relatively speaking, because people understand them. But in general the current generation is not especially interested in history, and the social problems of today are much more of a lively presence in people's lives. The same themes provide the basis for most film dramas. Here they are dealt with not in abstract form, but through real examples and in the most powerful possible form. Whether or not what is shown has artistic integrity is not at issue here, the point is that cinema moves with the current of the times, it is the product of a general sensibility. In a certain sense, people's interest in printed news and weekly reports in the cinema is not so different from their interest in cinema drama. Certainly one major reason for this is their devotion to and immersion in the present. Film drama enters and touches people's everyday lives. It might be that extraordinary artistic achievements come to fruition in this representation of life.

Which way this trend will go we cannot yet predict; but it will certainly be in stark contrast to modern theatrical literature

The features that characterize cinema drama have already been named, and the more pronounced these typical features are, the more they captivate the audience. If one looks at those programmes that have proven especially popular, this success can usually be traced to particular dramas.⁸ For example, the Asta Nielsen dramas were without exception the most popular ones shown in the better theatres (In contrast, the situation in the suburbs was exactly the opposite. For the film *Zu Tode geheit/Harried to Death*, with Asta Nielsen in the lead role, audience numbers fell below average.) A programme containing the hit *In der Nacht des Urwalds/Jungle Nights* had almost the same high frequency of attendance, as this film is named again and again on the questionnaires.

All these box-office successes (they include, along with the Asta Nielsen dramas, *Das Weib ohne Herz/The Heartless Woman*, *Abgrund/Abyss* and *Fraulein Frau/Little Miss Woman*) have certain uniform features in common. Dramas made by German companies,⁹ exclusively, are at the centre of interest. It is true that most of the great dramas that are shown originate from German-based companies, simply because these can in general be sold somewhat more cheaply. Furthermore, a degree of conformity to national tastes seems to be the most favourable precondition for great success in terms of the kinds of films shown. In the case of the majority of cinemagoers, one cannot yet speak of a cosmopolitan sensibility in people's tastes. Films that allow members of an audience to make a connection with their own social environment, whether depicting life as it is or as they wish it could be, are the most popular and allow for greater emotional identification. Indeed emotional identification really is the crucial factor here, for film representations have a very direct effect, sweeping spectators along with the action and enabling them to experience the hero's predicaments. Foreign films are less able to arouse this sort of interest because they are characterized by a foreign sensibility and only seldom strike a chord.

In terms of their content, all the films deal with that issue which constitutes the object of representation not just in film but in every area of art nowadays, and it is this theme that gives rise to their popularity in the first instance. *Social issues* are the focal point of attention. These dramas usually describe a woman's struggle between her natural, sensual instincts and the social conditions she faces that contradict these instincts. Her options are either spinsterhood on the one hand or the possibility of marriage to a husband who usually comes from a significantly higher or lower social group on the other. The details of the action, such as the strong sensual content of individual scenes to which the material frequently lends itself, do not miss their mark and are the reason why these films are especially popular. These kinds of drama are so significant for cinemas and so

8 Either the numbers of visitors remain high during the period when a particular film is being shown even though all other programme numbers have changed, or else it is precisely those films being considered here that are mentioned especially often on the questionnaires.

9 The Asta Nielsen dramas are shot in Denmark though financed by a Frankfurt-based company.

popular within individual occupational groups that we have already addressed above the question of their overall role in the cinema. The following chapter sets out, however, to examine in greater detail their relationship within and towards the cinema movement as a whole.

The cinema and its audience

Children

The link between the degree of interest in dramas and in cinema in general is least marked in children. It also seems too hasty to assume a straightforward association between the frequency of children's visits to the cinema and the extent of their enthusiasm for the medium, as they are not yet entirely independent agents and cannot be assumed to have the necessary money at their disposal. Nonetheless the proportion of those who may be assumed to have no interest whatsoever in either theatre, concerts, public lectures, variety shows or cinema is only twenty per cent. It is impossible to explain this negative result by reference to specific conditions within the children's social environment, since this figure includes children of both skilled and unskilled labourers as well as those of artisans and low-ranking civil servants. Rather, the cause is most likely to be found in psychological factors, in a certain listlessness on the part of the children surveyed towards the world around them in general.¹⁰

It is true that opportunities available to individuals vary to a certain extent according to their parents' social position. For example, a trip to the theatre or a concert is feasible for the majority, while for others cinema is the only form of entertainment available. Wherever the desire for spectacle is awakened, it turns first to the nearest opportunity, the cinema. Seventy-nine per cent of boys among our respondents and thirty-three per cent of girls have been to the cinema at some time.¹¹ One rarely encounters children who have been to the theatre, concerts, public lectures, variety shows or the circus and who have never been to a movie house.

Indeed, the opposite occurs more frequently. The urge that makes some children seek out both sorts of entertainment – a hunger for sensation, for something different from everyday life, for stories that will allow the imagination to run wild – is not bound by any discrimination whatsoever concerning the method by which these impressions are created. Cinema satisfies these demands at least as well as a theatrical performance. Images that for most people only existed in imagination are brought tangibly close to them in film – a daring ride across the steppes, a fire in a prairie woodland, a criminal escaping over rooftops and walls. A boy will seldom approach a film so dispassionately as to criticize the unreality and impossibility of these kinds of scenes. But this delight in the sensational is not something that only came along with the arrival of

¹⁰ Every age group and almost every occupation contains about twenty per cent of people from a lower social group such as this, that figure becomes somewhat smaller as the economic situation improves and thereby removes any external obstacles that might stand in the way of people engaging in leisure activities. Custom and social influences later draw even the outsider into the realm of entertainments. Of course these wider social influences have a more powerful effect on the issue at hand here namely theatre and concert visits in those social groups where both have become a tradition and less so in the proletarian groups that lack any tradition and in which new elements within the class gradually provide this motivation.

¹¹ This proportional relation between boys and girls accords with observations made at childrens showings.

cinema it has a very long tradition¹² To the extent that living in the close confines of cities has eliminated the possibility of experiencing such adventures at first hand, substitutes are provided Fewer and fewer activities are devised by children themselves, indeed the city's young people have neither the environment nor the space for such games and escapades Thus film has gradually become an ever more dominant factor in the lives of today's young people, one that exercises a far-reaching influence on their entire psychical development This becomes more true the less that opposing influences are able to channel their imagination in healthy directions such influences might include education and upbringing and the different values passed on by those means. Thus it is hardly surprising that cinema has had the greatest impact among groups where children are usually subject to least educational influence, that is, among the lowest levels of the proletariat The keenest cinemagoers, or those who go to the cinema at least once a week – twenty-two per cent of boys and five per cent of girls – are largely from families whose insecure economic situation does not provide an appropriate foundation for children's psychological and intellectual development Fourteen of the twenty boys in the survey who went to the cinema at least once a week are children of day labourers or have no father at all

During these early years of development, all opportunities for experiencing the world – deriving in particular from the child's immediate surroundings – are contingent on children's intellectual maturity, and greater or lesser intelligence seems in general to be matched by fairly uniform tastes. This group-based concurrence is clearest in children of the lowest social stratum¹³ These children, and the boys especially, all showed the keenest interest in cinema and at the same time were least likely to visit theatres, concerts or public lectures In so far as they retained any recollections of a theatrical performance of *William Tell* or of a fairytale they had attended on some occasion these remained, especially among the boys, only a vague memory, and were often mixed up with the content of some cinema drama or other For these children, picture houses *are* the world They are a substitute for everything that is given to those who grow up in more favourable circumstances – a substitute for theatre and concert visits, days out, and so on. These are children whose life is lived out in the gloomy apartments and narrow streets of the city In the midst of this neglect, boys have a large amount of freedom Until they enter an occupation, they are left more or less to their own devices, and it is easy for them to earn – or steal – the few pence they need to get into a cinema The frequency with which boys take the latter option can be gleaned from reports by the youth welfare agencies.

The girls in this class are much more restricted They usually have a host of domestic duties to fulfil or younger siblings to look after

13 Male and female pupils in the special classes

Given that any free time they have is taken up with such duties, cinema cannot assume so towering a significance in their lives as it does for the boys. This explains the relatively small number of girls who go to the cinema, as well as the fact that they do not go very often. Moreover, these girls are generally speaking not as interested as boys in the sorts of material presented in cinemas.

Boys' tastes

14 These kinds of films are mentioned twenty times; other kinds only three times

15 They were found exclusively in the two higher school classes especially in the language classes

Stories about Red Indians and trappers embody the height of enjoyment for boys, especially for those at a more primitive level of intellectual development.¹⁴ For the next, more able social group, regular attendance at films about war and soldiers, which are in any case more popular among young people in general, can be considered characteristic. Otherwise, the choice of material remains fairly consistent for all boys, except that the more able ones seem more interested in theatre and concerts.¹⁵ Several children, in particular those who have entered adolescence early, also mention romantic and social dramas of not exactly salubrious timbre, along the lines of, for example, *Sundige Liebe/Sinful Love* and *Halbwelt/Demimonde*. Extensive mention of nature documentaries is evidence of the influence of school as well as of a particular kind of upbringing. Children from apparently better-off social groups also display a greater sensibility to their surroundings and, when choosing a cinema, will be guided by whether or not the auditorium is well furnished and ventilated. The rest, by contrast, are influenced solely by the length of the queues in front of the small overcrowded movie theatres, which might persuade them only to look for a larger one, as long as their predilection for stories about robbers and Red Indians can be satisfied there.

Are the tastes expressed in the boys' choice of viewing material a result or a precondition of their extraordinarily frequent cinema attendance? I would not hazard to decide this issue without further reflection. In any event, what is clear from the boys' descriptions of their own predilections, is that cinema is the main place where these boys gain their understanding of the world and its mores.

Girls' tastes

The films that most appeal to girls in this age group are of a syrupy and sentimental type that is rarely shown, especially in childrens' screenings. When girls do go to the cinema, it is seldom out of pure interest in any particular programme: rather, they enjoy it merely as they do any other excursion they make with their parents. Boys, on the other hand, usually make their own decision to go to the cinema; they particularly like to go with friends. Neither do girls get so thoroughly caught up in what they are watching: the stimulation they experience at the theatre or at concerts (as revealed especially in their recollections of fairytale plays) seems less restricted, and such

entertainments preoccupy them more, it appears, than does any film production

For girls, music in the cinema seems to be the main point of attraction. Almost all female cinemagoers share this trait. The variety within the programmes appears to confuse them; thus the girls surveyed were unable to recall any films in particular. Instead they make general comments, such as liking 'the jokes' or 'the stories' or 'when there's something to laugh at', and they seemed to have no definite preference with regard to films. Perhaps also they are more influenced in their tastes and preferences by teachers who have protested against cinema in schools. In many towns such protests have led to a complete ban on children's attendance at cinemas.¹⁶ The specially organized children's screenings on afternoons when there is no school, from which the censor has removed all exhilarating material, are too 'dull' for the streetwise city boys, who manage to find ways and means of staying in the cinema, sometimes until late at night.

¹⁶ Shortly before this survey was carried out a regulation was introduced by the police authorities in Mannheim according to which children under sixteen were no longer admitted to regular screenings.

The extent to which young people in particular are contributing to the expansion of cinemas is revealed not only in my own questionnaire data but also in statistics gathered by movie theatres themselves. On some days the number of children is higher than the number of adult cinemagoers: indeed, if the fall in ticket sales suffered as a consequence of the recent children's ban were not fairly considerable, then surely cinema-owners would see no cause to attend the endless protest meetings aimed at lifting these restrictions. All manner of arguments are put forward to this end, above all the view that legislative bodies are exceeding their powers and impinging upon parental authority. But this argument can scarcely be considered valid, especially with regard to those children and young people for whom the cinema poses a danger due to its all-embracing hold on their lives, and for whom every other realm of activity falls by the wayside under cinema's influence. If state intervention is required, then surely it is here.

Young male workers

The division already evident at elementary school between the preferences of the more and the less able seems to become even more pronounced after leaving school. While the more able tend to enter the skilled trades of blue-collar worker or tradesman, so the less able gravitate towards casual or unskilled work. Certainly, the tastes expressed by the latter group seem to represent a direct continuation from the remedial classes in elementary school. Furthermore, the greater freedom experienced after leaving school means that undiscerning activities, and cinema screenings in particular, can take a stronger hold. These different occupations usually correspond to a very particular social background. Thus labourers are usually the sons of day labourers or factory workers.

whereas clerical assistants and precision engineers are usually the sons of artisans and civil servants. Young workers can be divided into three categories:

17 Mainly students at the vocational school (the skilled trades are found much more in the trade schools) and predominantly the classes of metalworkers, dairymen and casual workers

- 1 A bottom group consisting of those not tied to any particular occupational group and for whom occupation appears to be primarily a matter of chance¹⁷
- 2 A group I would describe as characteristically proletarian, consisting largely of metalworkers
- 3 A petit-bourgeois group represented by clerical assistants, engineers, or technicians

Among young workers in the first group, the entire range of preferences might be summed up as: 'Wild West, *Zigomar the King of Crime*, wrestlers, tightrope walkers'¹. The cinema offers plenty of material in the cinema to suit these tastes: young workers can literally feast on stories about Red Indians and robbers. Nature documentaries and comic sketches appeal solely to those few who typically attend the cinema only occasionally; and the overview of the general level of taste in this group is completed with the various sensational dramas that count among the respondents' favourite films, and usually contain powerful and stimulating components.

Those of similar age training in other occupations within this first group appear positively naive by comparison. Red Indian and robber stories are still most popular with them, but they are also interested in burlesque comedies and historical stories, which are not 'powerful' enough for the more raucous young men. The only kinds of stimuli that appeal to these latter are cinematic sensations. More than for any other social group or age group, cinema is the focal point of all their interests: it is the single factor that dominates all else. This lowest group of young workers shows the highest frequency of cinema attendance recorded – thirty-two per cent go at least once a week and twenty-nine per cent at least once a month. In the case of milk boys¹⁸ and barbers' apprentices, the figure for those who go to the cinema at least once a week is as high as forty-five per cent. Of the twenty-six regular cinemagoers in this lowest group, eighteen are sons of day labourers or widows, three the sons of skilled labourers, two the sons of artisans and three the sons of shopkeepers. Thus, once again, the majority of these cinema enthusiasts come from the lowest social group.

18 Milk boys and other delivery people

It seems quite normal, given the circumstances, that in this lowest group there is no further interest in art forms which demand a finer sensibility. Apart from the plays *William Tell* and perhaps *Wallenstein*, probably viewed at some point in the past under the supervision of a teacher, no other works are mentioned. At most young workers in this group might have attended one operetta since then. But this is the limit of their entertainment experience, and only a few (who in any case fall entirely outside the parameters of this class) have other interests. One example of this male minority is the

fifteen-year-old son of a widow. He is apparently better-off than others in this group, and mentions certain operas (*Freischütz*) and other pieces of music as his favourite works, alongside some plays (*Prinz von Homburg*, *Jungfrau von Orleans*). Another exception is a musician – also the son of a musician – who has had occasion to connect considerably with artistic matters. He mentions *Tannhäuser* and the Mahler celebrations as the cultural events that have made the biggest impression on him. For the others, however, such things lie completely outside their realm of interest. They rarely associate a particular performance with the word ‘theatre’ or ‘concert’, and repeatedly mention the picture houses and what they have seen there in response to the question about theatre- or concert-going. In general the range of material viewed remains the same as for elementary school pupils. Only one other entertainment form – variety – appears to interest this lowest group of young workers.¹⁹

¹⁹ These are mentioned especially by the unskilled factory workers the milk boys and other delivery people. Variety numbers are most popular with twenty-four out of the forty-four students of both classes or else they share first place with some other entertainment.

There is, in sum, no doubt whatsoever that in the absence of more elevated interests the cinema has gained a certain influence over the whole way of thinking and living of this very wayward group. They model their own attitude to life on the lives of criminals, on the morals of Apache killers and on the personal courage of the heroes of Red Indian dramas: indeed, they clearly emulate these celebrated role models in real life. This is precisely the age at which male adolescents’ minds are most receptive to such influences. These are the years during which thieving gangs are formed, years when some run away from home to lead a life of adventure in the big wide world. Their whole imagination is geared in this direction, and it is these obsessions that must be understood as the basis of juvenile crime. For a group as weak, as morally wayward and as irresponsible as this, moreover, it is the lowest grade film material that holds the greatest attraction.

For many others, however, addiction to the cinema is merely a childhood malady which disappears of its own accord as the years go by. This seems to be the case, for example, for the majority of skilled metalworkers, who are the typical proletarian group.²⁰ Their responses positively reek of blood and corpses. They offer their opinions with extraordinary conviction and self-confidence. But in general their preferences encompass more than those of the first group of young workers: indeed, it is quite easy to identify a certain development in taste among those in this second group as they grow older.²¹ What is at first striking is their insatiable hunger for entertainment material, a hunger that applies to all manner of entertainments and becomes more powerful the older the respondents become. For fourteen-year-olds, the main attractions apart from cinema are the muscleman displays put on by variety artists, whereas apart from the obligatory *William Tell* drama, no plays are mentioned. But among those who are a little older, even this area of spectatorship has broadened out somewhat, and there is evidence of

²⁰ At least this is the case nowadays if one compares the young with the adult workers. However, the latter did not grow up under the influence of this modern creation and it is debatable whether the picture will remain the same in the future.

²¹ These are young workers between fourteen and eighteen years of age.

interest in music, too, which becomes keener with age. Responses to music also become increasingly detailed, and for some older boys music is no longer associated merely with a general sense of hearing something pleasant. Only one of the fourteen-year-olds talks of 'snappy music'. Among the fifteen-year-olds, a total of seven name specific pieces of music, while most simply mention 'military concerts' or perhaps 'operas and operettas', and a few individuals name particular composers – Beethoven, Mozart, and so on. The older apprentices in this second group, meanwhile, express a definite preference for operas.

The majority, admittedly, take in everything indiscriminately, without any apparent differentiation or discrimination concerning their viewing habits: the sole unifying tendency seems to be an extraordinarily keen interest in anything erotic or sensual. It is very obvious that for fifteen and sixteen-year-olds their love lives and sex lives are of great importance. This sets the tone for their whole outlook on life and for the forms of entertainment they value. It is on this basis that one should understand and make sense of all their comments, and their whole range of interests, including their gradually awakening preference for music. Eroticism is, of course, the reason why many of them go to the cinema. They go in the company of their 'sweetheart' or 'beloved' (in eleven out of twenty-one instances among the fifteen and sixteen-year-olds). Sensually charged films correspond exquisitely to their general psychological predisposition, and so-called 'love dramas' or 'moral dramas' appear extremely frequently as favourites among those who go to the cinema often, usually with their girlfriend. The movie theatre that is 'quiet and dark' and 'where the most dramas are shown' is usually most popular. For example, the following combination occurs eleven times among twenty-one of the fifteen-year-olds from the trade school who fall into this second group of young workers: regular cinemagoing with their girlfriend and a marked interest in such love stories as *Liebe der Stundel/Love of the Moment*, *Verblutet/Bled to Death*, and *Flammen im Schatten/Flames in the Shadows*. This powerful, stimulating subject matter frequently coincides with an interest in music. Here, love plays the same important role as stories about robbers and Red Indians do for the first group. Viewed dispassionately and in isolation, these films are no more suggestive than any operetta or comedy. But if one imagines them in the context of these fifteen-year-olds' full range of interests, in which any feeling for more finely nuanced impressions has utterly atrophied in the face of so many love dramas, variety attractions and so forth, then one cannot fail to recognize the moral threat that the cinema poses to the city's young people. They do not like more thematic material, such as scientific lectures or historical dramas, which are geared towards an intellectual rather than a purely emotional response – indeed perception based on emotions alone seems to

appeal especially to this particular group. Anything they are able to experience in this way they take on board with a complete lack of discrimination.

At the same time these young male workers become increasingly interested in sporting activities. Their whole lives are centred around, on the one hand, a pronounced sensuousness and, arising out of this, a preference for cinema and light music, and at the same time, an interest in sporting activities aimed at developing physical prowess, which in turn gives rise to their interest in the muscleman displays at variety shows. These different kinds of experience are expressed most clearly in one response from a fifteen-year-old machine-fitter, the son of a boilermaker from Mannheim:

Do you go to the theatre, public lectures, concerts, variety shows?

‘I go to almost everything. On Mondays I go to the cinema, Tuesday I stay at home, Wednesday I go to the theatre. Fridays I have gymnastics at 9.30 pm and Sundays I go walking in the woods with my girlfriend from next-door.’

What do you enjoy best? ‘I particularly enjoy Mozart’s music, Richard Wagner’s dramas and Schiller’s dramas in the court theatre and national theatre on Sundays.’

Do you go to the cinema? How often? On your own or with others? ‘Cinema now and then, but not on my own.’

When do you usually go to the cinema (day of week, time of day)?

‘On weekdays between 8.30 and 11 pm.’

What kinds of film do you like best? ‘Love dramas, stories about trappers and Red Indians, current news from around the world and films about aviation and airship travel.’

What have been your favourites? ‘*Das Leben im Paradies/Life in Paradise*, *Fremde Schuld/Strange Guilt*, *Die keusche Susanna/Chaste Susanna* and *Moderne Eva/Modern Eve*, all four-acters.’

Which cinema do you like best? Why? ‘The Saalbau, it’s dark, with a nice programme.’

Another respondent with varied interests who often goes to the theatre and concerts, finishes by summarizing his feelings thus: ‘The cinemas are the best thing we’ve got in Mannheim.’

Cinema can, however, never achieve this sort of dominance in a situation where the school-leaver is guided by a strict bourgeois upbringing. This is the case with the third group of young workers, those who represent a more petit-bourgeois type. These mostly come from families of low-ranking civil servants and artisans, and the choice of things they devote their attention to reflects the varied influences to which they are subject and which have shaped their tastes. The patriotic education they have at school falls on fertile soil because it is usually echoed in the home environment. This explains this group’s preference for dramas about war and historical events. Typically, it is the fathers of the young men in this group who

decide what can be seen. Since these fathers are used to working out their finances very precisely, visits to the theatre, to concerts, and especially to the cinema are generally considered a superfluous luxury. Consequently, these young men's range of viewing material is very limited. They do not appear to be as 'aware' as members of the previous group – though not as licentious, either. Few have ever been to a play or concert. A large proportion – twenty-seven per cent as opposed to three per cent of metalworkers – have never been to any kind of entertainment event. It is practical matters which occupy the thoughts of this group, and as their profession places greater demands on their personal performance (especially, for example, in the case of the precision engineers), this assumes a more central role in their lives. This stronger attachment to their profession is apparent in their more frequent attendance at scientific lectures, especially those of a more specialist nature. For the less highly qualified labourers, among whom work is increasingly seen simply as a means of earning a living, all these energies remain unfocused, which is why they seek release in a mass of different activities.

Of course, cinema also has its adherents in this petit-bourgeois group, and mentions of Wild West and Red Indian stories crop up now and again alongside historical and modern dramas. However, the more licentious films are of little importance to this group and have typically been seen only by accident. After all, a small town provides much more fertile ground for the development of a conservative petit-bourgeois outlook than does a city: indeed, the positive characteristics of this group are often eroded to such an extent in the city that only certain negative stumps of such identity remain to distinguish these petit-bourgeois youths from industrial labourers. This is revealed through a comparison with members of the same professions in this third grouping from Heidelberg.²² They lack the reserve and restraint of the petit-bourgeois class in Mannheim – although, equally, they are not so completely lacking in discrimination as those proletarian boys with whom they share a broadly uniform set of tastes. Interestingly, it is not the city boys who display greater sophistication or broader horizons, as one might suppose from the more plentiful opportunities open to them to go to the theatre, a concert, or a better quality cinema. It is not easy to find definite reasons for this. As already mentioned, the milieu they come from is the same. But perhaps the children in the smaller town do not live on the street so much and are less exposed to the other influences found in the city, which are uncontrollable and usually negative. Perhaps mothers in Mannheim spend more time at work and are consequently less able to devote themselves to raising their children.

Nevertheless, Heidelberg youth still represents an elevated type of person, characterized by a strong love of nature and a certain patriotic sentiment. One crucial factor in relation to this is the keener

²² The professions compared here represent an upper elite of small artisans: manual construction workers, craft metalworkers, precision engineers, and so on. Cobblers, tailors and the like, most of whom, moreover, came from the country, had watched much less, but had vivid recollections of what they had seen.

interest shown by this group in theatre and concerts. Almost without exception *William Tell* was not the only play they had seen. Many had seen *Wallenstein*, *Maria Stuart* and *Glaube und Heimat/Faith and Homeland*, and the overall list of works viewed by members of this group extends considerably beyond this. There is a general interest in music, although this rarely extends beyond marches and military concerts, with the *Hohenfriedberger Marsch* mentioned very frequently. On the other hand, there are no extraordinary individuals such as those who rise up now and again from among the insipid parochialism of this group in Mannheim, and perhaps their existence is possible only in a small town environment. Among fifteen-year-olds in Heidelberg, one never finds any who cite Beethoven or Bach as their favourite music, or whose other interests also place them at a higher than average level. The way in which Heidelberg boys approach different forms of entertainment is generally determined more by a strong thirst for knowledge than by the urge to watch and to experience on a purely visual and lyrical level. This explains their relatively high attendance at lectures,²³ especially those dealing with occupational issues. Generally speaking, the Heidelberg boys show a greater degree of work-related interest. For example, they will watch pictures in the cinema with the eyes of an electrical engineer, a construction worker or a gardener, depending on their job. It is not only nature documentaries that they approach with this sort of intellectual curiosity but also dramas, especially when these illustrate historical events. A preference for nature documentaries crops up most frequently – more frequently than for dramas, a tendency which is not observed with any other group.²⁴ However, on average it is not the very regular visitors within this group in Heidelberg who express this preference – they still always prefer dramas.

Even the keen nature lover would tire of watching these documentaries too often, as the impressions they offer are too varied unless framed and placed into some specific context by accompanying narration. Current affairs are also accorded keen interest. Zeppelin flights, films about warships, the railway accident in Mulhausen, a journey to the North Pole and other such items are often mentioned. Films about foreign cities and countries arouse a longing to see these places. The various ways in which the cinema can affect people is illustrated very clearly in the differing tastes of these members of professional groups of the same age in two different towns. For the one group it is a way of expanding knowledge in order to create the foundation for a better education, while for the young people of Mannheim it is the place to experience a *frisson* from sensations and horror stories – the more, the better. This is why they prefer going to cinemas in the suburbs, ‘because you get to see juicy things there’. These people have placed cinema at the centre of their lives, so that other interests barely have any space alongside it. For respondents in Heidelberg, meanwhile, it

²³ Whereas only sixteen out of 138 Mannheim metalworkers and precision engineers showed any interest in public lectures – usually about general scientific themes, out of the sixty-three members of the same professional groups in Heidelberg fourteen mentioned quite specific – usually technical – lectures.

²⁴ Of the 278 school pupils in Heidelberg forty-five mentioned specific nature documentaries, whereas out of 131 school pupils in Mannheim this figure was only four – a sign that the former showed much greater interest.

is just one means among many others of being entertained and of satisfying one's thirst for knowledge

Adult workers

At a later stage in life the contrast between petit-bourgeois and proletarian elements, so apparent at an early age, becomes somewhat blurred within the working class. Indeed, those who typify the petit-bourgeois group can now be found only among the artisanal class. The son of an artisan who has become an industrial worker becomes a representative of his own profession as the years go by, and no longer lives in the shadow of his father's occupational background. However, a distinct new type emerges in this process among the workers: the organized trade unionist. All the workers referred to here are members of trade unions, and for all of them this means a certain intrusion of their occupation on their private life. Indeed for the organized unionist, trade unionism is so absolutely central to his life that all other factors are determined by and subjugated to it. What impact, then, does trade unionism have in general on the adult worker's attitudes towards cultural phenomena, specifically cinema, and what impact do other factors have that distinguish adult from young workers?

Growing economic independence removes one obstacle that presents itself to young workers with an interest in theatre, concerts and cinema. With increased financial autonomy almost all of this group have taken the opportunity, at least once, to go to a play or concert: most, of course, have gone more than once. However, a large proportion can no longer recall what they saw, or retain only a few hazy, vague notions, usually related to insignificant details of the story. In general, however, it seems that as the years go by there is an ever stronger urge to escape the narrow confines of one's own environment. There is no indication that these workers' outlooks grow dulled by their work, at least not between the ages of thirty and forty: on the contrary, their tastes become more differentiated and refined than those of younger workers. Wanting to 'have a share' in the intellectual property of society motivates them to go to the theatre, to concerts and to museums. By contrast, educational events that offer information about some aspect of the sciences, such as technology, are only rarely chosen.²⁵ In their preference for lectures on astronomy, religious questions and the fine arts, a rather different tendency manifests itself. The origin of this group's educational ideal may lie primarily in a religious need for satisfaction through the pursuit of certain semi-mystical ideas: however, here we are not talking about some quest that finds solace in the notion of life after death, but rather one that offers escape through a more perfectly fashioned existence in the here and now.

Rational thought plays only a minor part in this search for a new meaning in life towards which all efforts can be directed, and indeed,

²⁵ Whereas for example the low-ranking civil servants – as far as one can tell from the sparse material available – are much more interested in more practical lecture topics.

such meaning is hardly likely to be found through reference to restrictive, rational considerations. For the modern worker, consuming and understanding something at a purely emotional level seems in general to constitute the most appropriate way of expanding one's horizons. This sort of solace from the everyday is in keeping with these workers' strong preference for music, operas and concerts, a preference which is far less apparent among artisans, for example. However, tastes do vary considerably within this group, and alongside the few who prefer Bach and Academy concerts there are many others who prefer the music of the Tegernsee peasant bands and light operetta melodies. Wagnerian operas and modern operettas are mentioned most frequently of all, then comes *Freischütz*.²⁶ This group's more intense preoccupation with artistic matters, or perhaps the influence of particular union leaders, leads them, then, to develop a certain degree of discrimination and thus, amongst other things, to be rigorous in their criticism of cinematic productions and to reject trash and sensationalism. Few in this group display a taste for acrobats and wrestlers, and in fact variety shows, like cinema, seem to be popular mainly with young adolescents only. Even for regular cinemagoers among the adult workers – those who go 'for the pleasure of seeing something new or wonderful' – the cinema loses ever more of its ability to impress as they advance in age. Whereas fourteen-year-olds will save this most enjoyable form of entertainment for a Sunday, older workers will usually go after work, very often out of boredom or because there is nothing else on offer with which to occupy their leisure time.²⁷

Not only does the frequency of individuals' visits to the cinema among these adult workers fall off with increasing age, but so too does the overall number of cinemagoers. The reason for this, however, is to be found less in changes in taste than in external causes. Financial circumstances are, perhaps, the most decisive factor. Earlier on in life, when the worker only has to make his own living, he does not need to account for every single penny spent. But later, when a whole family has to be fed on a wage that may well have risen only slightly, there is no money left over from basic outgoings to spend on luxuries. Many adult workers may nonetheless have similar reasons for cinemagoing to their younger counterparts. More than half go 'with someone else' to the cinema, though the younger ones usually specify 'with a girl' or 'with friends' in their response. For all lovers, the darkened cinemas are a popular place to spend time. 'Come inside, our cinema is the darkest in town', is how one entrepreneur extols the virtues of his establishment, which in itself demonstrates the popularity of this aspect of cinemagoing. Cinema is thus the preferred form of evening entertainment for adult workers who want 'to offer her something', to find dramas that match 'her' taste perfectly. Thus the worker, adult or juvenile, is able at relatively minor expense to do a little something extra, such as

²⁶ These are also performed quite often in Mannheim. See Professor Schott: *Die Opernaufführungen in Mannheim/Operatic Performances in Mannheim*.

²⁷ This same phenomenon was also found with adults in all other occupational groups. Cinema is no longer an end in itself but for the more intelligent becomes the means to a variety of other ends.

hire a box or a front-row seat, in order to place himself in a favourable light with his sweetheart

In some cases, married couples continue cinemagoing on a regular basis, usually for the wife's benefit. She wants to enjoy a bit of sensation, to watch moving tales of women's destinies or to see infinite sentimentalism in order to escape the narrow confines of her domesticity. The husband is usually too reserved – and often too refined in his tastes – to derive any pleasure from this. He has other pursuits that offer him fulfilment instead, primarily his interest in politics and trade union activities, which take up an ever greater portion of his time. Cinemagoing is consequently less prevalent among older people, indeed for today's forty and fifty-year-olds it has never been very significant, since cinema did not even exist 'in their day'. All in all, though, cinemagoing does seem to be a common form of evening entertainment, though the older labourers show less interest than the young ones.

Twenty per cent of respondents among the adult workers had never been to the cinema. A similar percentage is seen across virtually all the social and age groups of those surveyed and interviewed. In the case of adults, however, we can identify clearly a number of reasons that might lead to this position. Of this twenty per cent, most belong to the lowest social group for whom nothing in the world seems to exist apart from working and eating. This may either be because of their unfavourable economic situation or because their disposition simply makes them generally indifferent. It is not that they have a negative attitude towards the cinema, but rather that they have none at all. Those who cite particular reasons for rejecting the picture houses in their current form are fewer in number. This attitude is influenced by such factors as religion, or rather the warnings issued by clerics. It seems that many only began to voice criticism after cinema became the subject of lively controversy in the daily newspapers. This is indicated by the answer often given to the question about the frequency of cinema visits: 'Before, yes – but not now.'

The cinema is only of very minor importance to people who display an especially strong interest in matters of science or the political party to which they belong. These people live life in a highly ordered way, and their thoughts and concerns are much too focused on specific issues and concerns to spend time and money 'on that kind of rubbish'.²⁸ They are also the only ones who criticize the cinema as such, be it from a party political standpoint, from a general aesthetic point of view, or in relation to the dangers it poses to young people. One labourer writes: 'Usually films make me sick because they are so far removed from the facts, and because they usually contain a tendency that I don't like, namely that good always comes through in favour of the ruling class.' Those interested in science seek out the elements that will broaden their knowledge, but

28 Out of eleven workers whose interest in politics or science is particularly apparent, only three go to the cinema once a month, the rest less often; most had only been to a showing on the odd occasion, just to see what it was like.

the average screening does not usually give them what they are looking for and they 'prefer not to kill time in this way' However, nature documentaries do enjoy a certain popularity as a vehicle for expanding knowledge. The extent to which individuals can derive intellectual stimulation from such documentaries, as well as from dramas, is revealed by the response of one working woman, who writes 'You start making comparisons, when classical works are shown for instance (Greeks, Romans, the Odyssey), about architecture then and now, about traditional costumes, and suchlike' Apart from these occasional impressions, cinema lags far behind other forms of entertainment for this more educated group of workers However, it would be wrong to assume too readily that an interest in the arts or science corresponds to a rejection of cinema. As a rule, these things are not mutually exclusive: rather, interest in one stands in inverse proportion to interest in the other After all, both are a matter of money to the worker Either he cannot go either the theatre or the cinema, or else he goes to both now and again. Thus the average worker is not usually an enthusiastic adherent of either form of entertainment. Going to the theatre 'now and again' is part of the modern industrial worker's way of life, as is the occasional evening at the cinema, perhaps once a month or once a week

Nature documentaries are rivalled in popularity only by dramas Asta Nielsen dramas and *In der Nacht des Urwalds* are particular favourites, as are various historical films. Stories about Red Indians and detectives of the sort which preoccupy young people's imaginations lose their appeal and provoke hardly any interest in the adult worker.²⁹

The rural population

Cinema plays a lesser role, of course, among labourers who live in rural areas. they do not know the city well, apart from where they work, and they usually go straight home once the factories have closed.³⁰ Their rare visits to the cinema can be explained solely by these external difficulties, and it would be wrong to draw any conclusions from this survey concerning the influence of rural living on the tastes of those who live in the country Once a labourer from the country has set up home in the city, the frequency with which he visits the cinema is no different from that of the worker born and bred in the metropolis Thus, of thirty-four workers born in the country and now living in the city:

- eight go to the cinema once or more a week (one quarter)
- seven go to the cinema once or more a month (one fifth)
- ten go only rarely to the cinema (one third)
- seven never go to the cinema (one fifth)

Of twenty-one workers born in the city or who have lived there for a long time:

²⁹ In this respect the lower-ranking civil servants are quite distinctive as far as one can tell from the sparse material available They do not get much out of nature documentaries, on the other hand they become quite immersed in the historical material In other ways, however, they correspond to the workers as far as their attitude towards theatre and concerts is concerned

³⁰ Of the twenty eight workers in a Christian trade union almost all of whom lived in the villages surrounding the town only ten had ever been to the cinema at all (as opposed to eighty-one per cent on average) and these were mostly the younger ones who rounded off the week with a visit to the cinema after work on Saturdays

six go to the cinema once or more a week (one quarter)
 six go to the cinema once or more a month (one quarter)
 seven go only rarely to the cinema (one third)
 two never go to the cinema (one tenth)

What emerges clearly from these figures is that the opportunity for cinemagoing is enough to awaken a taste for films, and extended exposure is not necessary. On the contrary, the only respondents whose sole interest in entertainment relates to cinema all come from rural areas, and all maintain that plays, concerts or other events are as yet outside their range of interests – this is why they describe cinema as ‘the best’. Characteristic of this kind of respondent is one metalworker who gives the following responses

To question 1 Father: vegetable merchant
 To question 2 ‘I like cinema the best.’
 To question 3 Has no answer or only knows films, as these are the only things that have made an impression on him
 To question 4 ‘Three times a week’
 To question 5 ‘On my own and in company’
 To question 6 ‘The programme.’
 To question 8 ‘Yes.’
 To question 9. ‘Funny things, love dramas, Fritzchen, Max Linder’ He prefers three cinemas in the suburbs of Mannheim that are particularly cheap

For these social groups the impact of an urban environment seems to be indispensable for stimulating greater understanding of plays and concerts. This is quite understandable if we recall that, on average, members of this class approach all forms of art with no previous knowledge and attain a certain level of understanding only through constant exposure and reflection. Only a very small elite manages to progress this far in the face of this lack of prior instruction and other stimuli. The proportion of those who have a natural ability to appreciate artistic phenomena, and who have broadened their horizons despite the many obstacles in their way, is very low, and they stand out completely from their work

colleagues.³¹ A printer who gives the following answers may be considered representative of the type of adult worker who is interested in the arts

- 1 Elementary school.
- 2 Theatre twice a month, and more often if I had more money. I used to go more frequently. I’ve gone without food to go to the theatre
- 3 Grand operas, then troubadour, *Undine*, *Freischütz*, operettas, *Fidelio*, *Flachsmann als Erzieher*/*Flachsmann the Educator* nine times
- 4 Less often
- 5 Nature documentaries, farmers, lectures of any kind.
- 6 Fridays, pay-day

31 Thirteen out of some 111 workers fall into this category. Of these nine were born in the town and four in the country although they had already been living in the town for quite a long time (Overall, however the percentage of those born in the country is much greater.)

7 Yes

8 Nature documentaries, farmers in America, Helsinki

9 Norway

10 Yes, lasting artistic insights.

Working-class women

The distinctive elements that produce different types among male workers – the enthusiastic theatregoer, the trade unionist – do not exist among working-class women. They offer a much more uniform picture than the men, since their interests are mainly focused on just two areas: theatre and cinema. The latter is of particular significance as a form of entertainment. Going to the theatre, which occurs on average somewhat more frequently than in the case of their male counterparts, lags far behind, and working-class women never go to concerts or lectures. These women show almost no interest in scientific or party matters, which occupy a large proportion of men's leisure time. Those women who belong to social democratic associations are certainly keen party members. Some individuals have even been to meetings or lectures on occasion. But in general these women's ambitions to acquire useful knowledge that might serve as the basis for a political standpoint are extraordinarily weak. This explains why cinema plays such an important role, especially for those women who have no job: they have a lot of free time outside of their domestic work and relatively few immediate opportunities for filling it. They therefore go to the cinema more often, out of boredom more than from any genuine interest in the film or programme. While men might be at an election meeting, women will go to the local picture house, and will meet up with their husbands again after the performance. As time goes on, however, the cinema as stopgap becomes an important component in the existence of these women: they become gripped with a real enthusiasm for it, and more than half seek its pleasure once, or several times, a week. At the cinema they live in another world, in a world of luxury and excess which makes them forget their dull daily routine. All other interests appear meaningless by comparison, and the number of working-class women who have occasionally been to the theatre and have otherwise only been to the cinema is relatively large.³²

The only other interest evident in the group is music, as indicated by the repeated mention of operas in women's responses. Among the composers mentioned, Bizet and Mozart appear more frequently than Wagner – the former are not mentioned once by the men. However, it cannot be music alone that makes these women go to the opera so often – otherwise, concerts would surely be equally popular. Instead, it is opera's and cinema's simultaneous effect on the ear and eye, their musical interpretation of the story – something both forms have in common – that seems to appeal particularly to women's tastes. The latter is especially true of female shop assistants, who mention a

32 This result appears to contradict observations made at the cinemas where it is usually the male audience that is in the majority. However, at best it is further proof of the two assertions posited above: 1) that as people become more interested in politics the cinema assumes a secondary role. In a certain sense all those surveyed here could be considered in this category, as they are organized in trade unions and this circumstance explains the relatively low frequency of visits to the cinema among these respondents. The majority of male cinemagoers will be from the younger social groups and from those who are politically disinterested; and 2) that unmarried women from working-class circles are not independent enough to go to the cinema on their own. If the percentage were generally so high as among these married women, the female element among the cinemagoing public would have to be much larger.

preference for both opera and cinema music with particular frequency

Urban artisans

In the case of workers and artisans alike, there exists a particular focal point around which all other aspects of life are organized, and in relation to which members of these social groups may best be understood. If this dominant aspect is politics and trade union interests in the case of workers, for those in the artisanal class it is their occupation. For the working class, work fills only the hours spent in the factory. The self-employed artisan, whose survival demands a considerable amount of careful planning, takes his occupational worries home with him (though he shares with the worker the goal of achieving the highest possible standard of living).

The worker, as an individual, is only able to get so far: thus he seeks affiliation to a larger and more powerful trade association. Like a trade union, this organization aspires to more than the fulfilment of work-related ideals: its programme of activities enters and affects the private lives of its members, and relates among other things to cultural matters. Going to plays and concerts is recommended as a vehicle of cultural education, and adult workers go for this reason alone. The cinema in its contemporary form may not yet be able to lay great claim to being a component of education, but it is valued as such in these organizations.

Many artisans today, admittedly, lead a more solitary existence than that suggested by the trade associations. The whole of their personal progress, their concerns and efforts for the development of their business are in the end the only real measure of the standard of living they struggle to achieve. For the artisan, the two activities in which the working-class male engages – work in the factory and trade union activity – come together only in so far as these are geared towards his personal development. His occupation stands at the centre of his life. This means that the influence exerted by the trade union upon the development of workers' cultural interests does not exist for the artisan. For this reason alone his attitude towards theatre and cinema must be different from that of organized labour.³³ For the artisan, plays and concerts as well as films are things that lie outside his main area of concern, namely, his occupation. Only if they are brought into some relation to his occupation does he pay any attention. For example, master builders and decorators often go to the cinema to get new ideas from looking at buildings and furnishings.³⁴

Meanwhile, plays and concerts are only important to artisans in relation to a certain tradition which ensures that entertainment is not completely absent from the lives of their petit-bourgeois families. These artisans' fathers were artisans themselves and, as such, belonged to a social group whose circumstances allow for a trip to

³³ None of them shows any keen interest and certain films are not mentioned at all.

³⁴ The chamber of artisans in Berlin has incidentally used the cinema in a distinct way for the good of the profession. It has had films shot in the various workshops in order to make it easier for boys who have left school to choose an occupation and to gain as many recruits to the artisanal class as possible.

35 Only one shoemaker

36 Only eleven had ever been and only four on a regular basis

the theatre or to a concert now and again. Thus there are very few who have never been to any entertainment show³⁵ Nevertheless, none displays a great interest in such activities. An occasional visit to a play or concert is simply a matter of course for this social group, and only 'tasteful' or 'instructive' works are chosen. Nature and travel documentaries as well as films detailing technical processes and procedures are especially popular, since these are of practical value. Fiction films and operettas cannot make the same claim, and since cinemas mainly show this kind of film, people 'prefer not to spend any money on that kind of nonsense'³⁶ For a few, it is the place where they go with their family on a Saturday evening after work, in order to take a few hours' break from mulling over business matters. But artisans consider even this kind of entertainment to be very poor. What is actually screened means nothing to those questioned, and not one of them could recall the title or content of any particular film.

Rural artisans

For artisans living largely in the country, theatre and concert visits are rarer because in addition to the adverse circumstances described above, there is also the difficulty of getting to such events. This is why a fairly large number of rural artisans have never been to a play or concert, nor to see a film, unless they did so while on military service. But those who come to the city are often familiar with almost all entertainments on offer. A visit to the city is a rare event, and these artisans use it to compensate for the long periods of isolation they spend in the country. As theatre performances take place at inconvenient times, cinema is the usual form of entertainment chosen. This gives rise to the apparently strange phenomenon that the proportion of artisans who have been to the cinema is larger among the rural population than among the urban one, namely seventy-five per cent (as opposed to thirty-two per cent in Mannheim). These visits are few and far between, of course, and there are no regular cinemagoers among this group.

Artisans represent the one social group in modern society for whom work functions merely to provide the necessary economic basis for their 'real' existence outside work. The life of the artisan is predominantly centred on occupational ideals, and in the absence of any division between 'life' and 'work', the realms of life that lie outside work, such as art, can be of only incidental importance. As soon as work becomes organized on a large scale this unity disappears, and individual workers seek maximum pleasure in their free time to compensate for the associated mechanization of their occupation. This dual existence, with its need for multiple pleasures, for stories that nourish the individual, is not peculiar to the class of industrial workers alone. The importance of theatres and cinemas, indeed of all forms of entertainment, is increasing in line with a

division of labour that is rising today in all sectors of the working population

Male clerical workers in the commercial sector

It is among the commercial clerical professions that the above is especially evident. In smaller towns or smaller businesses these professions display more of a conservative character, akin to the artisans. But in Mannheim they represent a broad social group comprising individuals who mostly play only minor roles within large-scale commercial enterprises. Their passage through life therefore bears a certain similarity to that of the industrial worker. Yet fundamental differences lend this group a quite specific character in terms of its members' attitude towards the entertainments being explored in this study. While they come from the same petit-bourgeois circles as young workers, and while the majority enjoy the same level of education, they nonetheless develop a marked class-consciousness, and seek to differentiate themselves from the workers in every conceivable way. Having attained a certain self-awareness, the younger ones will emphasize rather strongly – often unnecessarily so – that they go to a better kind of movie theatre, while for the older ones this becomes a quite natural expression of their distinct group identity. For example, clerical workers never go to the cinemas in the suburbs, rather, even the youngest among them sets great store by sitting in a theatre 'that isn't so popular' and 'where there's only a better class of audience'. In general, the desire for comfortable and pleasant surroundings seems to be more developed in this group than among the working class, perhaps because the former sit in clean offices during the day and so develop a greater desire for cleanliness and comfort.

Whereas for young workers the most important motivation for going to a particular movie theatre is a long programme with as many stories as possible about moral dilemmas and detectives, among the white-collar clerical workers concern is focused primarily on their surroundings, on having 'a pleasant time', and on the other people in the auditorium. Their desire, in other words, is for a comfortably furnished space and an audience wearing smart attire. But these differences are not based solely on considerations relating to the viewing environment. Plays, concerts, variety shows and public lectures are a normal part of life for this group, and virtually none go only to the cinema, even among the fourteen-year-olds: only occasionally is there an exception to this. The majority, indeed, display a preference for theatre and music and have no interest whatsoever in cinema.

There is no doubt that a more cultivated taste is in evidence here as compared with that of the average worker. This is apparent not only in the wider range of cultural productions with which these clerical workers are familiar, but also in their articulate mode of

expression in the questionnaires, and in the range of artistic fields in which they express an interest. It is difficult, of course, to capture specific details of this in figures. If their tastes could be summed up in a word, it would be '*Lohengrin*' for the younger group and 'Wagner' for the older ones, who also mention *Tannhauser* and the *Nibelungenring* alongside *Lohengrin*. Wagnerian operas are mentioned as favourite works seventy-nine times by 241 shop assistants aged between sixteen and eighteen, and many of those who simply mention 'operas' or 'music' may well have been thinking of Wagner. For this group Wagner – especially *Lohengrin* – is just as important and representative as, for example, *Zigomar the King of Crime* is for the lowest stratum of young workers. Indeed, interest in music is more pronounced here than among other groups, although in general plays are still mentioned just as often as operas and concert works. But whereas the mention of particular favourite composers is rare among artisans, it is a fairly frequent occurrence among clerical workers. On average musical preferences are articulated through frequent visits to military concerts, which seem synonymous with the very concept of music among younger apprentices in this group.

Considering male clerical workers as a whole, other features besides these general ones can be discerned which point to a certain progression in taste with increasing age. This is revealed in particular through a consideration of the place of cinema among different age groups. As earnings increase from the age of fourteen, so does the frequency of cinema visits, and the number of weekly cinemagoers trebles. The proportion of those who rarely go to the cinema falls accordingly in each subsequent year after age fourteen. But the predilection for cinema only seems to last up to a certain age, peaking at seventeen or eighteen. After this, interest tends to turn towards other pastimes, and cinemagoing never features highly from this age on among clerical workers. Detective films, moral dramas and acrobats are among their favourite entertainments, as they are for young people in general: however, in this instance, they feature only in second or third place within the overall range of interests expressed. At the same time, this group reveals a more developed sensibility for nature, expressed in the frequent mention of nature documentaries which are just as popular as dramas. As with other groups, however, the latter constitutes the main attraction for regular cinemagoers.

Tastes also change among clerical workers as they mature. Whereas those who have barely left elementary school display much the same interests as the schoolchildren who enthuse about stories involving Red Indians and historical themes, older boys are interested in sensational dramas as well as Red Indian stories. Later on, the sensational dramas alone attract interest. The preference for humorous stories is strongest among very young people: there follows a period when dramas and nature documentaries feature more

37 These films had just enjoyed extraordinary success in Mannheim at the time of this survey. On the other hand however as the shop assistants go almost exclusively to those movie theatres in which they had been shown and the cinema enjoys very great popularity among them in general one can conclude that they constitute a large percentage of the cinema audience overall. The programmes offered by the theatres in question, especially the aforementioned hit programmes, are a fair reflection of the tastes of this group as far as cinema is concerned.

prominently, while sixteen and seventeen-year-olds turn increasingly to dramas. Those mentioned most frequently are Asta Nielsen dramas, as well as *Der Eid des Stephan Huller/The Oath of Stephan Huller* and *Die vier Teufel/The Four Devils*, alongside numerous nature documentaries.³⁷

Three stages can be pinpointed in the clerical workers' developing taste in film and entertainments in general between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. The mass of those who represent the least mature type can be characterized roughly as follows. A large proportion, about twenty per cent, have never seen a play or film. The rest have been to a production of *William Tell*, while some individuals have also been to other classical plays. Members of this first group especially enjoy watching wrestlers and acrobats. When they want to listen to music, they go to military concerts. Few (about thirty-three per cent) go to the cinema, although this is a high percentage when compared with theatre or concert visits. Some go to the cinema fairly often but never to a play, concert or public lecture. Their tastes are directed exclusively towards dramas about detectives and robbers, and some humorous stories are also popular. Sundays are reserved for cinemagoing, and members of this least mature group go to those movie theatres that provide the greatest stimulation and sensation at least cost.

The second group among the adolescent male clerical workers comprises an average type who has roughly the following range of interests. The number of those in this group who have never seen any film or play is considerably lower than those in the least mature group. The majority have not only seen a number of plays, but have also been to several concerts and display a strong interest in scientific or work-related public lectures. The range of works has increased and includes such dramas as *Wallenstein*, *Maria Stuart* or *Glaube und Heimat*. Some operas, usually *Lohengrin*, also feature here, alongside modern operettas. A few individuals with a deeper interest in music mention Beethoven's symphonies or string orchestras. About seventy-five per cent go to the cinema, or have tried it at least once. In this group, the main motivation for attendance is no longer to see 'lots' and for the cinema to be 'cheap', but the actual content of the programme: they show a preference for nature documentaries and urban drama.

38 This group includes most of those who have obtained their one-year certificate. Among this group the frequency of cinema visits was lower than among apprentices with an elementary school education: for example only eighteen per cent of them went every week as opposed to forty per cent of the elementary school leavers.

It is more difficult to characterize the most highly developed type among the male clerical workers, since multiple interests coincide here.³⁸ Essentially, they differ from the two groups above in that they have a heightened taste for plays and music (whereas the more developed group among the working-class males, for example, generally seeks to extend its education by attending public lectures and guided tours of art galleries). For this third group of office workers, Wagnerian operas – especially the *Nibelungenring* and *Tannhauser* – are the main point of interest. Moreover, many

(predominantly those who also play an instrument themselves) take part in the Mahler celebrations and listen to symphony concerts on a regular basis. Although members of this third group go to the cinema extraordinarily often, a rather narrow range of films appeals to their tastes: these might include, for example, Asta Nielsen dramas, as well as *Der Eid des Stephan Huller* or *Die vier Teufel*. In addition, films detailing processes in the natural world, documentaries about foreign lands, and technical accounts of cinematographic representation arouse considerable interest.

In general, though, it is not so much particular films that represent the tastes of this group, but rather the fact that they spend so much time at the cinema. Their lack of interest in specific films, despite the extraordinarily high rate of cinemagoing, is symptomatic of a marked change in attitude towards cinema in general. The motivations for going to the cinema are no longer the same as for the first two groups of young male office workers. Whereas younger apprentices were motivated by subject matter, among older ones answers such as 'out of boredom' or 'to kill time' appear ever more frequently with age. These comments highlight a very important point in understanding the significance of cinema in general, which goes some way to explaining the huge queues at cinema screenings. Cinema draws people away (and consequently can be said to benefit) from the *ennui* of our times, which is particularly apparent in certain occupations, despite – or perhaps precisely because of – the strain they place upon workers.

What may be a temporary condition for one group can be a permanent one for another – especially, it seems to me, for the young male clerical worker. At seven o'clock in the evening he has served his time at the office where he works. This still leaves a long period of free time ahead of him, a period that may often seem to constitute merely a boring interlude between this evening and tomorrow morning. For very young workers especially, other interests are rarely sufficient to counter the dreariness of their existence. Only those who are better off can afford frequent visits to plays or concerts; and with very few exceptions they remain at best somewhat unresponsive spectators, with what they watch in no way broadening their mind or horizons. This helps to account for the apparently random array of productions they mention as having particularly enjoyed, which does not reveal an evolved taste in any particular direction. Indeed most young office workers lack the necessary parental guidance or adequate education to engage with artistic matters on any deeper level. Class-consciousness does not allow them to subscribe to common ideals, as it can amongst the working-class labourers. At the same time, the activities of the various trade associations to which they may belong are usually directed towards occupational matters alone. Likewise, as a consequence of the ever-increasing rationalization of work that keeps

individuals in subordinated positions throughout their lives, the majority of office workers cannot find complete fulfilment in work, as may be the case with artisans, for example. A large proportion of this group in consequence remains trapped within an isolated existence lacking in prospects, and so many seek escape by exposing themselves to as wide a variety of sensational stimuli as possible. Occasionally individuals can be found who have managed – usually at an older age – to give their life a goal and meaning by developing some interest or other. But for many, and for the younger ones almost without exception, cinema is the best way of filling the unoccupied hours, despite the sharp criticism they level at it. The fact that almost half the young male office workers surveyed spend at least one evening every week at a movie theatre can be attributed in part to the great popularity it enjoys as a place where they can spend time ‘with [their] girlfriend’ partly, though, cinemagoing can be explained by the boredom that plagues young people, with the attraction of a certain thrill constituting one of the motivating factors for attendance – even if few of them openly acknowledge this.

Since the merit of attending with a girlfriend is no longer an option for older white-collar workers, who are usually married, the cinema declines ever further in popularity among this group. For a few, it remains an evening’s entertainment that is still valued from time to time. Others apparently consider it an insult to suggest that cinema might hold any interest for them. In principle, however, all members of this generation take a decidedly negative view of cinema, citing their own personal reasons for condemning the medium either in its entirety or on account of its various excesses. The precise nature of their tastes, however, can only be guessed at from the general comments made in response to the question about favourite works, to which they reply with the incontrovertibility of dogma ‘everything that was good about it’ or ‘everything in its own way, if it was really top notch’. Answers to this question varied greatly between individuals, however, and at best the average cinema performance, ‘this second-rate art’, is not considered to reach the cultural standards expected by older white-collar workers: cinemas are visited at most infrequently and then just to pass the time. If anything, nature documentaries are considered acceptable, especially ‘as a means of education for the people’, while now and again someone in this group expresses a taste for drama.

Female clerical assistants

As with male clerical workers, cinemagoing among adolescent girls seems to be popular mainly with a particular age group, and becomes progressively less important as time goes on. However, even at those ages when attendance is highest, cinema never becomes as important for girls as for boys. Overall, only sixty-three per cent of the total number of respondents among these female clerical workers were

39 Those living in rural areas make up a lower average number of visitors especially in the lower boys' classes of the commercial trainees on which this is based and their strong influence is almost entirely absent in the girls' department this is because the majority of these have already been resident in Mannheim for a long time

cinemagoers, whereas seventy-nine per cent of their male counterparts went to the cinema.³⁹ The extent of young women's disinterest comes more fully to light if one contrasts the numbers of regular cinemagoers in each group of clerical assistants: the ratio is eleven women to twenty-one men. The reason for this surely has its roots partly in the lesser degree of independence among young girls. Daughters are always more closely guarded by the family, and parents have a large say in how their daughters spend their free time. Girls rarely do anything completely of their own choice. They may occasionally go to the cinema with their family, and later on with their 'boyfriend' or 'a suitor', though much less often with other female friends. Apart from the greater dependence that precludes regular cinemagoing among these girls, they also do not seem particularly interested in cinema: if they were, this would surely be demonstrated through more frequent cinemagoing as they grow older, earn more and thus enjoy greater independence, as is the case with their male counterparts. On the contrary, however, cinemagoing peaks among young women at the age of fourteen or fifteen and declines year by year thereafter.

It is almost exclusively the better movie theatres that are frequented by female office workers. The content of these cinemas' programmes is such that dramas about robbers and detectives are only rarely mentioned in the questionnaires, as are licentious productions along the lines of *Asphaltpflanze/Asphalt Lass* or *Sundige Liebel/Sinful Love*. Nor do these girls show much enthusiasm for Red Indian stories or historical themes. Even among fourteen-year-olds, love stories are the main object of interest, especially those whose content they can relate most easily to their own lives and circumstances, or which depict the glamour of cosmopolitan modern circles. These films' narratives usually involve the destiny of an ordinary woman who, after many misguided adventures, ends up either in moral turpitude or 'in silent happiness'. Most dramas of this sort are highly sentimental in character, as the titles of various works mentioned by female office workers indicate: *Die Rose der Mutter/Mother's Rose*, *Fraulein Frau*, *Der Leidensweg einer Frau/One Woman's Suffering*, *Die Kontoristin/The Clerkess*, *Frauenschicksale/Women's Destinies*. At the centre of all these films are emotional conflicts experienced by a woman. It therefore goes almost without saying that Asta Nielsen enjoys huge popularity and arouses great admiration. In films directed by Urban Gad especially, Nielsen's passionate temperament, consequent guilt and ultimate destiny correspond to an outlook on life that these girls already have, and so they are able to identify with her completely.

In addition to dramas, nature documentaries arouse as much interest among female office workers as among their male colleagues. But these girls' attitudes towards them seem to be distinct. While the young men tend to mention pictures of far-off countries and of

scientific processes and procedures, thereby demonstrating an interest in these films' content, the girls respond in much more general terms, with their preferences seemingly fixed mainly at an aesthetic level. For example, the girls frequently mention images of water or the ocean, such as *Italienischer Wasserfall*/*Italian Waterfall* or simply 'waterfalls or wave movements' and 'shifting icebergs', without adding any more precise description. Comedies, however, are less popular with these girls than among their male colleagues. In general, both groups show equal interest in different genres, albeit that such interest is generally less pronounced among the girls. However, a preference for dramas does become more apparent among female clerical workers from the upper classes. Here, the generally lukewarm interest in cinema on the part of female workers is matched by more frequent visits to plays and concerts, but tastes in these areas too are characteristically vague.

It seems that, on average, even the fourteen and fifteen-year-old girls in the group surveyed have been to see more plays and concerts than boys of the same age. Their musical tastes are also more strongly developed from the outset. The way they indulge this enjoyment is different from boys of the same age, for whom music is synonymous with military music and is connected primarily with patriotic emotions rather than a feeling for the music. This patriotic dimension is completely absent among the girls, to whom opera melodies hold a greater appeal. Besides Wagnerian music, which is just as popular as among young male office staff, romantic operas such as *Mignon*, *Martha* and *Tosca* are mentioned much more frequently by adolescent girls. The musical accompaniments of the cinema ensembles are also very popular, indeed these ensembles are the decisive factor in girls' choice of cinema, much more so than for male apprentices. This enjoyment of music does not, however, seem to lead to any heightening or development of these women's tastes: they may go to concerts more often than the men, but almost never mention particular pieces of music or favourite composers. Women seem to engage with music on a purely emotional level, with which the conscious mind has so little to do that even titles remain a triviality: the girls lag far behind their male colleagues when it comes to registering music at an intellectual level. This predisposition, which makes them focus less on reality and cultural phenomena, is matched by the lack of interest they show in public lectures and scientific documentaries. In general, then, female office workers' tastes are not high-minded or serious, but neither equally do they lose themselves in the depths of tastelessness: while none shows an interest in Bach or Beethoven, in religious issues or social problems – unless these are made tangible through cinematic drama – so none of them is interested solely in acrobats, marches, or detective dramas.

Other social groups

For women of the higher social classes – in so far as one is not dealing with members of the educated intellectual elite – the same is essentially true as for the young female office workers considered in detail above: the only difference is that these higher-class women go to the cinema much more frequently, so long as their time is not limited by any occupation. Asta Nielsen dramas and historical productions in particular motivate them to attend a screening. And the more uncomplicated and carefree their own lives are, the more they seek out sensational stimuli and escape through watching films. Cinema brings representations of a wider world to small towns, it shows women the new Paris fashions, and the kinds of hats that are being worn. With sensations large and small, cinema helps them to while away those dreary daytime hours that are these days increasing as domestic chores become progressively simpler. Films must be especially accessible to women, and indeed it is said that women tend to absorb cinematic impressions on a purely emotional level, as a unified whole. By comparison it seems positively arduous for highly educated, intellectual people to empathize with films, whose action is often arranged in sequences without any overriding context. Several people used to grasping matters on a purely intellectual level thus state in the surveys that they find it extraordinarily difficult to understand what is going on in a film.

One cannot really speak of adult members of the higher social classes having any particular tastes as far as cinematic productions are concerned – although they have opinions about the cinema phenomenon in general. Members of these classes rarely responded to the questions about which films they had enjoyed best: films tend to be rejected *in toto* on artistic grounds.⁴⁰ Even nature documentaries are accorded no more than a certain didactic value, ‘especially for the lower classes’, and yet members of the higher social classes still go to the cinema – indeed, fairly regularly. They go in the evenings if they have nothing else arranged or, in the case of women, preferably in the afternoons when they have done their shopping and want to escape the hustle and bustle of the shopping centres and streets in a cinema rather than a café. Thus, about eighty out of a hundred members of these classes in the survey had been to a cinema at least once, and sixty of these on a regular basis. These regular cinemagoers come exclusively from the officer and merchant classes, whereas members of academic professions (including students) produce the lowest proportion of cinemagoers across the board. Whether the need for light entertainment alongside other intellectual pursuits is not as strong in these groups, or whether such distraction is found through other means, is hard to tell. Perhaps the more abstract thinking required in the academic profession makes it easier for them to relax with headier pursuits, while still expending little concentration. However, those belonging to professions

⁴⁰ Only here and there are voices raised (usually among younger people) in praise of cinema’s remarkable achievements both in terms of its presentation as well as in the way famous cinema actors perform, which might lead much further to a new kind of representative art.

41 The need for this kind of compensatory activity which places no demands whatsoever on the individual but merely provides a diversion is most apparent among shop workers engineers and officers Avid cinemagoing among the latter is probably due to the fact that their profession allows them more free time than the other two groups

involving practical and tangible goals seem capable of enjoying art only after completely modifying their whole way of thinking this demands intellectual effort, however, and is why they prefer very light entertainment in their leisure time in order to help them escape from thoughts of work⁴¹ 'I'm too tired in the evening to deal with serious things like theatre and concerts' is a frequent response, 'and that's why I go to the cinema'

Apart from work commitments, a hundred other things occupy the time of those in the higher social classes – being a member of a club or having social commitments, and consequently needing to be informed about all the latest plays and works of art and to have a grasp of politics and modern literature Such obligations mean that (non-academic) members of these classes need a counterweight – something that for once places no intellectual demands on them – and thus entertainment for entertainment's sake becomes a necessity

Equally, those who have a lot of time and few pursuits find in cinema a suitable activity for taking their mind off things and experiencing sensations Cinema can satisfy these multifaceted needs – the desire to escape from the everyday, to relax from the demands of modern life, boredom and the hunger for sensation. If cinema had not been invented, something else would have had to appear in its place. Perhaps cafes with troupes of artistes or variety shows would have witnessed much greater expansion without cinema. However, as things stand, cinema has proven to be a form of entertainment that has attained a power and significance well beyond that of all these antecedents If in the process it has encroached on other entertainment media and diverted audiences away from plays or concerts – which, judging by the complaints of theatre directors about how badly their business is doing, would seem to be the case – then the only ones on whom responsibility can be pinned are those huge numbers of people for whom theatre and concerts have turned out to be only a temporary diversion Members of these higher social classes want nothing more from cinema than entertainment pure and simple, and the opportunity to have a good laugh but cinema should not and cannot take the place of theatre or other forms of artistic experience for them – it simply satisfies a quite different need

Accordingly, when cinema ventures to take on higher, artistic goals, many see this as inappropriate Likewise, they view attempts at raising the standard of productions through the participation of famous stage artists to be doomed to failure from the start They think this would at once eliminate the refreshing naivety and simplicity of cinema, and drag down artistic work to the level of mediocrity Nonetheless, the demands that members of the higher social classes make on cinema are by no means meagre, and the average film is still completely unable to deliver what the cultured city-dweller considers acceptable in aesthetic terms 'The sentimentality of the films, the exaggerated gestures' and the often

very tasteless presentation offend many such people. Others even find the inherent nature of cinema, with its rapid succession of funny and tragic depictions, unbearable. For the majority, however, the quality of films is of no significance whatsoever, because their impact retains vividness for only the briefest of moments, and indeed, it is in any case quite different motivations that influence cinemagoing. Genuine interest in films remains the motivation mentioned most frequently only among clerical workers and women. But the degree of enjoyment offered by the cinema is sufficient only to persuade very few of them to go on their own. Some unmarried men will make use of this escape route once in a while, probably out of boredom. Among married couples, it is the wife who suggests going, while for young people it is more frequently their blossoming romances that constitute the motivating factor. For the male companion in these couples, however, 'she' allegedly becomes the object of observation more than what is going on on the screen. 'She is always moved to tears', and indeed many find it far more entertaining to watch other cinemagoers – especially female cinemagoers – than to watch the films, with this providing an occasion for many people to spend an hour in the cinema now and again.

When all these cinemagoers are asked why they actually go to the cinema, most look blank. '*Faute de mieux*' ('there's nothing better to do') answered one lady, but this '*mieux*' is very different for each individual. What can be said in general, however, is that cinema combines a broad enough variety of elements to appeal to many different people in different ways, and has thus come to represent a powerful force whose absence is so unthinkable that it seems scarcely justified to question whether its very existence is 'good' or 'bad'.

Conclusion

Cinema is a phenomenon to which most people feel some connection if they are at all caught up in the mood of our modern times: it lacks significance only for those who remain rooted in an earlier period of economic organization on account of their occupation (hence the low frequency of cinema visits among artisans) or who remain aloof from entertainments in general on account of other overriding interests in their lives (such as science or party politics). Cinema exists, then, primarily for modern people who are simply carried along by the current of the times. Indeed, cinema can be understood only as having arisen out of the fullness of this present time, and out of a broader constellation of cultural phenomena. With the new demands placed on people by a century of work and mechanization, with the greater use and abuse of people's energies bringing with it for some individuals a struggle for survival, the

other side of everyday life – relaxing doing something purposeless, being preoccupied with some aimless pursuit – had to offer some counterweight. The thousands of picture houses could never have emerged had the need for such entertainments not been engendered for the broad mass of the population by precisely such an intensification of work and consequent concentration of work time into fewer hours of the day. As industrialization has progressed, moreover, people found they had more money in their pockets. Increased leisure time and higher wages for the working classes are two of the factors crucial to any understanding of this characteristically modern medium.

And yet the cinema does have antecedents that satisfied similar, if less pronounced, needs in earlier times. Cinema now enjoys the position occupied since time immemorial by those forms of mere entertainment that have commanded justification simply by virtue of their very existence: yet the need for such a counterweight has never been articulated so clearly as it is today. In response to the question of what they seek in the cinema, the majority of respondents simply say 'diversion and entertainment', rather than something that instructs or uplifts, for example. Cinema is the place where no intellectual effort is required, where the greatest sensations can be effortlessly experienced. Wherever individuals prefer to seek relaxation by taking an interest in 'high' art, cinema loses ground: yet it may be wrong to think that individuals possessing extensive cultural knowledge can use this to relax or to reach an equilibrium in their lives.

On the other hand, of course, a level of cultural discipline can nurture a more worthy kind of entertainment. But who has the desire or the time for this, at a time when theatre and the fine arts move in ever more distant realms and lose all relation to daily life? Anyone wishing to experience art today must tear himself away as far as possible from earthly and everyday realities! Relaxation after work is not expected to place new demands on the individual, thus as long as art remains more than a game, as long as it retains its didactic aspect, so the desire for sheer spectacle will continue to seek fulfilment elsewhere. The average person needs something that will occupy his senses but requires no effort.

For decades the demand for light entertainment was suppressed and its legitimacy denied. In an age in which rationalism predominated, in which attention was fixed first and foremost on the purpose of any activity, the demand for cultural disciplining and 'high art' in all areas of life became a veritable preoccupation. Every coffee-house conversation, every visit to the theatre, had to enrich the individual with new insights and offer them something of 'worth'. And all too easily people mistook the appearance, the external signs, for the genuine article. All types of enjoyment, all forms of 'mere entertainment' were rendered, in effect, illegitimate.

The majority of educated people remain firmly convinced of the

illegitimacy of entertainment, and therefore find themselves in an ambivalent position *vis-à-vis* cinema. They go, but always with a feeling of shame and embarrassment, even though the need for mere diversion, for sensation, is perhaps more pressing than ever before

There used to be folk festivals, processions and performances given by travelling artistes' troupes. What people were primarily looking for in such occasions was something out of the ordinary – something that made sense in relation to their lives, yet something not ordinary or everyday. The pleasure in looking was indulged to the full on these occasions, and it is this same urge that today propels the majority of the population into theatres and cinemas. In those days, entertainment was a creation of the masses, closely tailored to prevailing needs and dominant tastes, but these tastes were simple and the same from place to place. Thus entertainment gave expression to a common sensibility, in terms of both its form and its content: there was something of the popular psyche in these performances. However, as the power of the great cities of old dwindled, these communal sensibilities decayed too, and shared leisure pursuits ceased to exist. Theatre and sociability continued in the (socially) exclusive context of private, closed gatherings. This period progressively brought about the emergence of the isolated individual, and by the time the city re-emerged, very recently, as a great communal entity, the individual had become too reserved and isolated to share every aspect of life with his fellow citizens. Leisure and sociability are no longer based on larger communities of people sharing an approach to and outlook on life.

Nowadays, too, entertainments are mass amusements, but individuals who participate in them are complete strangers to one another, and it is only on a superficial level that they join together and seek common ground. This trend is exacerbated by the ever greater decline in family-based sociability: as a result of economic development, younger family members attain financial independence and fly the nest early on. Thus life is lived to an ever increasing extent in public, and entertainment ventures now bring together the most heterogeneous social groups in their audiences. There are theatres and art galleries, concert halls and coffee houses, clubs and lecture halls, and then there is cinema, the most modern form of mass entertainment.

In every era, people's desire for entertainment has been satisfied in a distinctive way, and cinema is a medium inconceivable outside the present epoch. And yet not only is the need it satisfies an old one, the content of its presentations is not as new or lacking in tradition as might appear at first sight. If one looks a little more closely, there is much in cinema that resonates from the past and has merely re-emerged in this new form. Everyday life has never been lacking in sensation and excitement, and in earlier times ghost stories provided this – indeed they are still alive and well in rural areas. And where

enlightenment made these ghostly figures fade away, people found enough stimulating material to entertain themselves with over a tankard of beer and in conversation over coffee, as they gossiped about their neighbours or about war and intimations of war. And the heads of fourteen-year-olds are still filled, as they always have been, with stories about Red Indians, detectives, robbers and war.

Fifty years ago – and still today – young people were surrounded by fairground stalls where brightly-painted Red Indians performed with wild cries, or where their imaginations were stimulated by grisly depictions in painted panoramas – the earthquake in Lisbon or a shipwreck on the high seas, for example (the name being changed according to the most recent disaster): as long as countless people had died in the most gruesome way possible⁴²

But these travelling entertainments came to town only rarely, while small and large volumes of pulp literature about Red Indians and *Nick Carter, King of the Detectives* provided the requisite variety. But fairground enterprises and pulp reading matter are no longer in keeping with the times: they have outlived their function. The cinema has not pushed them out, but has rather taken their place: its stories are testament to the unchanging nature of young people's tastes. Cinema first arose in exactly the same place where live-rabbit-eating Red Indians and snake charmers, panoramas and waxwork displays celebrated their great successes – at the fairground. Gradually these other entertainments disappeared, and in the middle of the fairground stood the cinema, shining brightly with its thousand electric lamps. No direct decline in fairground activities has been recorded.⁴² But they have been stagnating for decades and have failed to keep pace with the spread of cinemas, coffee houses and cabarets and this must surely imply that they belong to a past era.⁴³ Today, boys and girls gather around cinema posters as they used to around fairground stalls – only nowadays it has become much easier for them to gain access to a world of adventure.

Whatever remained of the rudiments of pulp literature from an earlier epoch has now been forced into retreat, because it is cinema that has adapted itself more adroitly to the particular needs of the present. In a time when people live life so intensely, when every moment must hold its own experience and everything is caught in a swirling maelstrom, there is no longer a suitable context for Red Indian stories or cheap novels. For the imagination to travel along the hero's path, the reader requires an undisturbed environment, a small room into which nothing from the real world can enter. The young seamstress who loves a count, or the horror-filled secrets of a castle, still arouse as much interest as they used to. It is just that there is no longer time to wait for the tension to finally be resolved in the ninety-ninth of a hundred instalment pulp serial. In one cinema showing you can experience the same sensations in a short time, and for just a few pence.

42 Precise records on this do not exist

43 This assertion is based on personal inquiries at relevant locations

If, moreover, people are reading less pulp fiction because its stories are told more efficiently in films, they are also reading less folk literature. The cinemas will probably receive the blame for this too, but is it not rather the case that films based on folk literature constitute an entirely new form, a phenomenon contingent upon the other and yet not directly caused by it? This tendency cannot even be halted by the occasional successes achieved by the book trade following the appearance of film versions of famous novels such as *Quo Vadis* by Sienkiewicz or *Der Eid des Stephan Huller* by Felix Hollander.⁴⁴ Readers who judge a book on the basis of more than just how much excitement it generates will doubtless remain loyal to literature of value; but the rest are going along with the trend, unless the reading matter is of a distinctly modern cachet and conforms to the demand for plentiful and varied content for little money, as is the case with reading circles and the numerous illustrated weekly magazines.

⁴⁴ Survey in the *Börsenblatt der deutschen Buchhändler/Book Trade Newsletter* where those who judge from experience hold this view.

The theatre has been much more adversely affected by competition from cinema. This has occurred not only in those instances where individual theatres are in direct competition with cinemas to entertain audiences in a light-hearted way, as with operettas: the power of the new rival is also perceptibly felt in those instances where 'serious' art is the order of the day. It would be wrong to declare cinema the heir to the theatre – it has surely managed this inheritance badly! But it has drawn in large numbers of people who previously went to the theatre only to be entertained and amused for an evening, and who derived as much or as little from the play that was being performed as from a moving photoplay. No damage is done to art by the loss of this audience,⁴⁵ even if individual theatre companies are faced with issues of survival as a consequence. For theatre companies supported by public funds, this loss is less serious: these are usually located in the cities, where enough enthusiasts remain to fill the seats. But it is worse for smaller provincial theatres, where the proportion of the audience being enticed away by the cinema may constitute a fatal blow. 1908 represents the point when a drop in theatre audience numbers first became apparent. Since then theatre directors have been forced to watch as, year by year, their buildings have grown ever more deserted as the apostates flock to the movie houses. The displeasure of these theatre directors has therefore been directed in the first instance towards this rival. And yet the same is true here as for pulp literature, as noted above: cinema could not have attained its position of power if theatre and modern theatre literature satisfied current needs, and not just those of a small cultural elite. This can be attested by examining the kinds of plays which have suffered as a result of the fall in audience numbers.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ But indirectly damage is done even to art: for as a result of reduced takings the standard of the various performances has to be gradually lowered.

⁴⁶ According to studies of attendance at individual films in the seasons 1906/7–1908/9, 1910/11–1912/13 at the only theatre in a West German industrial town where there are many cinemas.

Despite reduced admission prices at theatres, which are seldom higher than those for average cinema seats, the number of people going to see classical plays and comedies is falling each year. The

47 Popular performances and normal performances taken together

majority of people today have a different, modern, sensibility and find themselves alienated from the classics even expensive seats for these performances, generally seating the cultural elite, are scarcely ever filled. However, having said this, taking into account the lowering of admission prices for popular performances,⁴⁷ then visitor numbers are dropping less rapidly in the cheaper sections of the theatre than in the expensive and midprice seats, classical and other older comedy plays have even shown a small increase in attendance. Meanwhile, it is hardly surprising that dialect folk plays such as *Der Pfarrer von Kirchfeld/The Pastor of Kirchfeld* or *Die Judin von Toledo/The Jewess of Toledo* show decreasing audiences from year to year (especially since 1908). There are no longer any real folk plays for the present day that can articulate the sensibilities of the population as a whole, and in terms of spectacle a reasonably good film will always beat a play staged in a provincial theatre.

48 Also characteristic is the extraordinarily sharp decrease in average attendances at fairytale recitations for children during the Christmas period which has fallen to one third.

Only one or two modern dramas can claim to speak for broad sections of the population at the present time, and even these can scarcely claim to do so for every group in modern society. Apart from the great success enjoyed in recent years by *Alt Heidelberg/Old Heidelberg* and *Glaube und Heimat*, interest in this kind of play has also been in steady decline. For the bulk of the population, modern one-act plays, satires and comic stories are completely alien, and they can make little of them.⁴⁸ Consequently, with the exception of one or two modern dramas and older comedies, the theatre is no longer able to attract mass audiences. The strong bonds that held audience and theatre together no longer exist: theatre no longer determines culture as it once did, and at the same time there seem to be no great creative forces that might arise out of the populace itself to enrich our current dramatic art. Where the theatre has completely forgotten its duty to culture and is no longer a place of artistic experience even for members of cultural elites, it has not been able to assert itself at all: putting on folk plays has done nothing for profits, but where entrepreneurs have attempted to win the audience over with light entertainment, they have gone to the wall even faster. Nowadays light entertainment really is the domain of cinema, which has progressively and with great aplomb seen off all other entertainments. This is clearly the case when one considers the development of theatre and other entertainments in Berlin over the past few years. From the beginning of the twentieth century, theatre, variety and cabaret companies in the capital constantly increased in number. Until 1908 they represented the crux of public entertainment and at their height totalled thirty-four theatres and thirty-four variety clubs and cabarets. Then, however, a more powerful rival appeared in the shape of cinemas, and these soon enjoyed far greater success and influence than theatres and varieties ever had. Of the thirty-four varieties and cabarets, only two thirds now remain. Sometimes a cinema has even moved into venues where the old entertainments

could no longer sustain themselves this happened, for example, with the *Haverlandtheater*, the *Passagetheater* and the *Intimes Theater*. Larger theatres, devoted solely to serious art, are less under threat. However, those showing mainly dramas and light-hearted works intended to appeal to the tastes of the suburban audience can scarcely compete any longer although their numbers have dropped by just two over the past five years, the remaining ones complain that business is very bad.

Only in one form does theatre continue to appeal to contemporary needs, and this is where music provides the key – at the opera. In provincial theatres, however, a drop in visitor numbers is in evidence even for the cheaper seats when older, more pompous operas are performed, such as those by Meyerbeer or Mozart, or romantic operas from the likes of Mignon, Zar and Zimmermann. Even modern and classical operettas no longer appeal to the tastes of the lower social groups as they did a few years ago.⁴⁹

On the other hand, *one* sort of music does seem to appeal to contemporary tastes – Wagnerian opera. Modern composers in general seem to appeal to the sensibility of the people more than literary figures.⁵⁰ According to the questionnaire responses, in fact, a preference for opera in some individuals is frequently combined with a predilection for cinema, and this is the case especially for women. This phenomenon seems to characterize the present time in general. On the one hand a certain mode of spectatorship, determined primarily by the emotions, has taken the place of intellectual insights: artistic effects engage with the senses only and not with the intellect, and this seems the most favourable precondition for musical appreciation. On the other hand, the more abstract mode of expression of opera and film dramas makes it possible for them to appeal to all the different emotions most powerfully present in spectators at each performance. They allow for a greater range of interpretations – and perhaps the abstract effects of opera and cinema dramas constitute the only possible entertainments that mass audiences can readily appreciate in this age in which culture and society are so heterogeneous, and in which there can be no question of a unified sensibility or common belief.

Translated by Kathleen Cross with contributions from Erica Carter and Robert Kiss

⁴⁹ This might be due to the quality of what has appeared in the past few years.

⁵⁰ Ticket receipts for seats costing over one reichsmark have remained fairly constant, while those for cheap seats have increased.

reports and debates

The *Boys Don't Cry* debate

The transgender gaze in *Boys Don't Cry*

JUDITH HALBERSTAM

- 1 Patricia White has argued that the gaze in *Boys* is Lana's all along. I think in the first two thirds of the film the gaze is shared between Lana and Brandon, but I agree with White that the film's ending transfers the gaze from Brandon to Lana with some unpredictable consequences. See Patricia White, 'Girls still cry', *Screen* vol. 42, no. 2 (2001), pp. 122–8.

In her stylish adaptation of the true-life story of Brandon Teena, director Kimberly Peirce very self-consciously constructs what can only be called a 'transgender gaze'. *Boys Don't Cry* establishes the legitimacy and durability of Brandon's gender not simply by telling the tragic tale of his murder but by forcing spectators to adopt, if only for a short time, Brandon's gaze, a transgender gaze.¹ The transgender gaze in this film reveals the ideological content of the male and female gazes and it temporarily disarms the compulsory heterosexuality of the romance genre. Brandon's gaze obviously dies with him in the film's brutal conclusion but Peirce, perhaps prematurely, abandons the transgender gaze in the final intimate encounter between Lana and Brandon. Peirce's inability to sustain a transgender gaze opens up a set of questions about the inevitability and dominance of both the male/female and the hetero/homo binary in narrative cinema.

One remarkable scene, about halfway through the film, clearly foregrounds the power of the transgender gaze and makes it most visible precisely when and where it is most threatened. In a scary and nerve-racking sequence of events, Brandon finds himself cornered at Lana's house. John and Tom have forced Candace to tell them that Brandon has been charged by the police with writing bad cheques and that he has been imprisoned as a woman. John and Tom

now hunt Brandon, like hounds after a fox, and then begin a long and excruciating interrogation of Brandon's gender identity. Lana at first protects Brandon, saying that she will examine him and determine whether he is a man or a woman. Lana and Brandon enter Lana's bedroom, where Lana refuses to look as Brandon unbuckles his trousers telling him: 'Don't . . . I know you're a guy'. As they sit on the bed together, the camera now follows Lana's gaze out into the night sky, a utopian vision of an elsewhere to which she and Brandon long to escape. The camera cuts back abruptly to 'reality' and a still two-shot of Brandon in profile with Lana behind. As they discuss their next move, the camera slowly draws back, and in a seamless transition places them in the living room in front of the posse of bullies. This quiet interlude in Lana's bedroom establishes the female gaze, Lana's gaze, as a willingness to see what is not there (a condition of all fantasy) but also as a refusal to privilege the literal over the figurative (Brandon's genitalia over Brandon's gender presentation). The female gaze, in this scene, makes possible an alternative vision of time, space and embodiment. Time slows down while the couple linger in the sanctuary of Lana's private world, her bedroom, the bedroom itself becomes an otherworldly space framed by the big night sky and containing the perverse vision of a girl and her queer boy lover. The body of Brandon is preserved as male, for now, by Lana's refusal to dismantle its fragile power with the scrutinizing gaze of science and 'truth'. That Lana's room morphs seamlessly into the living room at the end of this scene, alerts the viewer to the possibility that an alternative vision will undermine the chilling enforcement of normativity that follows.

Back in the living room – the primary domestic space of the family – events take an abrupt turn towards the tragic. Brandon is now shoved into the bathroom, a hyperreal space of sexual difference, and is violently stripped by John and Tom, and then restrained by John while Tom roughly examines his crotch. The brutality of their action here is clearly identified as a violent mode of looking, and the film identifies the male gaze with that form of knowledge which resides in the literal. The brutality of the male gaze, however, is more complicated than a castrating force. John and Tom not only want to see the site of Brandon's castration, more importantly they need Lana to see it. Lana kneels in front of Brandon, confirming the scene's resemblance to a crucifixion tableau, and refuses to raise her eyes, declining once more to look at Brandon's unveiling.

However, at the point when Lana's 'family' and 'friends' assert their heteronormativity will most forcefully upon Brandon's resistant body, Brandon rescues himself briefly by regaining the alternative vision which he and Lana shared moments earlier in her bedroom. A slow-motion sequence interrupts the fast and furious quasi-medical scrutiny of Brandon's body, and shots from Brandon's point of view

reveal him to be in the grips of an 'out of body' experience. Light shines on him from above, and his anguished face peers out at the crowd of onlookers who have gathered in the bathroom doorway. The crowd now includes a fully-clothed Brandon, a double, who impassively returns the gaze of the tortured Brandon. In this shot/reverse-shot sequence between the castrated and the transgender Brandons, the transgender gaze is constituted as a look divided within itself, a point of view that comes from (at least) two places at the once: one clothed and one naked. The clothed Brandon is the Brandon rescued by Lana's refusal to look, the Brandon who survives his own rape and murder, the Brandon to whom the audience is now sutured, a figure who combines temporarily the activity of looking with the passivity of the spectacle. The naked Brandon is the Brandon who will suffer, endure, but finally expire.

Kaja Silverman has called attention to cinematic suture as 'the process whereby the inadequacy of the subject's position is exposed in order to facilitate new insertions into a cultural discourse which promises to make good that lack'.² In *Boys*, the inadequacy of the subject's position has been presented as a precondition of the narrative, so this scene of the split transgender subject, which would ordinarily expose 'the inadequacy of the subject's position', actually works to highlight the *sufficiency* of the transgender subject. Thus, if the shot/reverse-shot both usually secures and destabilizes the spectator's sense of self, this shot/reverse-shot involving the two Brandons now serves both to destabilize the spectator's sense of gender stability and also to confirm Brandon's manhood at the very moment that he has been exposed as female/castrated.

Not only does *Boys* create a transgender subject position which is fortified by the traditional operations of the gaze and conventional modes of gendering, it also makes the transgender subject dependent upon the recognition of a woman. In other words, Brandon can be Brandon because Lana is willing to see him as he sees himself (clothed, male, vulnerable, lacking, strong, passionate), and to avert her gaze when his manhood is in question. With Brandon occupying the position in the romance which is usually allotted to the male hero and the male gaze, the dynamics of looking and gendered being are permanently altered. If usually it is the female body that registers lack, insufficiency and powerlessness, in *Boys* it is Brandon who represents the general condition of incompleteness, crisis and lack, and it is Lana who represents the fantasy of wholeness, knowledge and pleasure. Lana can be naked without trauma while Brandon cannot and can access physical pleasure in a way that he cannot; but he is depicted as mobile and self-confident in a way that she is not. Exclusion and privilege cannot be assigned neatly to the couple on the basis of gender hierarchies or class hierarchies, power is instead shared between the two subjects, and she agrees to misrecognize him as male while he sees through her

2 Kaja Silverman, *Suture in The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 236.

social alienation and unhappiness to recognize her as beautiful, desirable and special

By deploying the transgender gaze and joining it to an empowered female gaze in *Boys*, Peirce, for most of the film, keeps the viewer trained upon the seriousness of Brandon's masculinity, the authenticity of his presentation as opposed to its elements of masquerade. But abruptly, towards the end of the film, Peirce suddenly and catastrophically divests her character of his transgender gaze and converts it to a lesbian and therefore female gaze. In a strange scene, which follows the brutal rape of Brandon by John and Tom, Lana comes to Brandon as he lies sleeping in a shed outside Candace's house. In many ways the encounter that follows seems to extend the violence enacted upon Brandon's body by John and Tom, since Brandon now interacts with Lana *as if he were a woman*. Lana, contrary to her previous commitment to his masculinity, seems to see him as female, calling him 'pretty' and asking him what he was like as a girl. Brandon confesses to Lana that he has been untruthful about many things in his past and his confession sets up the expectation that he will now appear before Lana as his 'true' self. 'Truth' here becomes sutured to nakedness, as Lana tentatively disrobes Brandon saying that she may not 'know how to do this'. 'This' seems to refer to having sex with Brandon as a woman. They both agree that his whole journey to manhood has been pretty weird and then they move to make love. While earlier Peirce created quite graphic depictions of sex between Brandon and Lana, now the action is hidden by a Hollywood-style dissolve as if to suggest that the couple are now making love as opposed to having sex.

The scene raises a number of logical and practical questions about the representation of the relationship between Brandon and Lana. First, why would Brandon want to have sex within hours of a rape? Second, how does the film pull back from its previous commitment to his masculinity here by allowing his femaleness to become legible and significant to Lana's desire? Third, in what ways does this scene play against the earlier more 'plastic' sex scenes in which Brandon used a dildo and wouldn't allow Lana to touch him? And, fourth, how does this scene unravel the complexities of the transgender gaze as they have been assembled in earlier scenes between Brandon and Lana?

When asked about this in an interview, Peirce reverts to a very tired humanist narrative to explain this extraordinary scene, saying that after the rape, Brandon could be *neither* Brandon *Teena* *nor* Teena Brandon, and thus becomes truly 'himself' and 'receives love' for the first time as a human being.³ Peirce claims that Lana herself told her about this encounter and therefore it was true to life. In the context of the film, however, which has made no such commitment to authenticity, the scene ties Brandon's humanity to a particular

3 Interview with Terry Gross on Fresh Air, PBS Radio, 15 March 2000

form of naked embodiment that eventually requires him to be a woman

Ultimately in *Boys*, the double vision of the transgender subject gives way to the universal vision of humanism, the transgender man and his lover become lesbians and the murder seems instead to be the outcome of vicious homophobic rage. Given the failure of nerve that leads Peirce to conclude her film with a humanist scene where love conquers all, it is no surprise that she also sacrificed the racial complexity of the narrative by erasing the story of the other victim who died alongside Brandon Teena and Lisa Lambert. Philip DeVine, a disabled African-American man, has received scant coverage in media accounts of the case, despite the connections of at least one of the murderers to a white supremacist group.⁴ Now, in the feature film, the death of DeVine has been rendered completely irrelevant to the narrative. Peirce claimed that this subplot would have complicated her film and made it too cumbersome – but race is a narrative trajectory that is absolutely central to the meaning of the Brandon Teena murder. DeVine was dating Lana's sister Leslie, and had a fight with her on the night he appeared at Lisa's house in Humboldt county. His death was neither accidental nor an afterthought, his connection to Leslie could be read as a similarly outrageous threat to the supremacy and privilege of white manhood that the murderers rose to defend. By removing DeVine from the narrative and by not even mentioning him in the original dedication of the film ('To Brandon Teena and Lisa Lambert'),⁵ the filmmaker sacrifices the hard facts of racial hatred and transphobia to a streamlined humanist romance. Peirce, in other words, reduces the complexity of the murderous act just as she sacrifices the complexity of Brandon's identity.

The murders, in the end, are shown to be the result of a kind of homosexual panic. Brandon is offered up as an 'everyman' hero who makes a claim on the audience's sympathies first by pulling off a credible masculinity, but then by seeming to step out of his carefully maintained manhood to appear before judge and jury in the naked flesh as female. By reneging on its earlier commitment to the transgender gaze and ignoring altogether the possibility of exposing the whiteness of the male gaze, *Boys* falls far short of the alternative vision that was articulated so powerfully and shared so beautifully by Brandon and Lana in Lana's bedroom.

4 See Aphrodite Jones *All S/he Wanted* (New York: Pocket Books, 1996) p. 154

5 In the review copy of the film I saw, *Boys* was dedicated 'To Brandon Teena and Lisa Lambert'. This dedication seems to have been removed later on, possibly because it so obviously pointed up the erasure of Philip DeVine.

The class character of *Boys Don't Cry*

LISA HENDERSON

What might be the value of reading *Boys Don't Cry* as a social class narrative? More to the point, how might we interpret the film as a story of transgender becoming and punishment in a representational field whose class idioms are conspicuously coherent? I pose this question to interrogate popular discourses of transgender experience, the meanings of class belonging and difference in the commercial media and, finally, the reciprocal mediations of transgender embodiment and working-class life

Such themes are amplified in *Boys* by the film's roots in social reality, naturalizing or at least stabilizing its account of cultural locale and persona. Here, though, I want to emphasize the 'based on' rather than the 'true story,' to signify the layered continuities between text and life from which *Boys* emerges as the most recent and probably the best known version of Brandon Teena's death and its preceding days

Brandon Teena – the person – has been buffeted by various interlocutors and representations as alternately a young transman, a genetic girl, a tomboy, a teenage woman, a butch lesbian who passed as male in the absence of an affirming lesbian community, and as a universal subject who courageously sought to become his 'true self'. These are not just possibilities, however, but claims, and each carries different political weight. For me, Brandon was a young, female-bodied person who identified and passed as a man, and whose physical style and attraction to heterosexual girls and women were expressions and confirmations of his gender identity.¹ Whether and how Brandon might have further materialized his masculinity through

¹ The question of where Brandon's sexed body begins and ends is difficult. My description comes largely from Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: the Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia, 1998) p. 175, though to call Brandon 'female-bodied' sets aside the ways in which his masculinity is indeed felt in and written on his body. Prosser, however, locates material embodiment more centrally in chemical and surgical transsexuality. His discussion of Venus Xtravaganza (pp. 45–50) a pre-operative transsexual woman featured in *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1990) also addresses relations between the corporeal materiality of Venus's sexed and raced body and the social materialism of her class position (p. 50).

hormone treatments or surgery had he the resources – and had he lived – is not clear

In current parlance, Brandon was transgender, though to my knowledge that is not a term he used to describe himself. In threatening contexts (for example in the sheriff's recordings of investigative interviews following his rape, parts of which were adapted into the script of *Boys* and had been used earlier in the documentary film *The Brandon Teena Story* [Susan Muska and Gréta Olafsdóttir, 1998]), Brandon described himself in more clinical terms as having a 'sexual identity crisis'. It is uncertain, however, exactly what that meant to him or whether he might have used other phrases on other occasions.

In *Boys*, the terms of Brandon's gender identification are mixed. Brandon regards himself as a boy, though sometimes even his self-descriptions shift for strategic reasons. Others see him as a boy, too – until they stop doing so, at which point he is at the mercy of their chaotic and hostile attributions. He finally becomes a transitional body made violently accountable to a gender binarism which permits no alternative embodiment or subjectivity, demanding instead that both one's body and claims about one's self conform to (born) male masculinity or (born) female femininity, and to heterosexuality as their normative counterpart. Brandon as character is not quite exposed and killed for being a dyke (though he is sometimes identified as one, which I shall discuss further below), but as a freak, a gender liar whose nerve in reporting his rape provokes the homicidal rage and fear of his attackers, men whose masculine excess and perilous homosocial bond Brandon had earlier sought to be included in.

Boys has unnerved me since its very first screening. Like many viewers, I have always known what to expect: Brandon's murder and the abjection, intimidation and violence that preceded it. But while most of the violence comes from those fictional others in the social world of the film, gender malevolence, I would argue, also comes from the film's plot, particularly the romantic recuperation of Brandon as Teena in a late (and short-lived) rendering of his and Lana's love affair as a lesbian relationship. This is particularly visible in the surprising, even perverse love scene that follows Brandon's rape. 'Were you a girly girl, like me?', Lana asks Brandon, as he props himself up on one elbow and she gently removes his shirt and the Ace bandage strapping down his breasts. 'I don't know what to do', Lana continues. It is her first declaration of sexual inexperience (despite earlier love scenes), and thus becomes a self-conscious reference to the specifically lesbian sex Lana has never had but is about to, with Brandon as a girl. Maddeningly, the scene affirms what Brandon's rapists had imposed (while reclaiming him later as their 'little buddy') – that Brandon is female. While other moments of sex-gender uncertainty or even duplicity are contained

by the plot (when, for example, in order to explain biographical inconsistencies and his illegally assumed identities, an incarcerated Brandon tells Lana he is a hermaphrodite), it is disturbing to watch Brandon be humanistically recovered by the script into a love that not-so-humanistically refuses the masculine gender he has struggled to become and for which, indeed, he is finally killed

As Judith Halberstam has suggested, however, the conventional romantic style of the scene may work for those audiences who would prefer to receive *Boys* in its universalizing, promotional terms – as a tragic love story between two people (Lana, and especially Brandon) who sought personal truth, a gesture familiar or even necessary among commercial protagonists.² To be fair, first-time feature director Kimberly Peirce and her colleagues had a complicated artistic task in bringing history and licence to Brandon's volatile biography. But perhaps especially in fiction films based on true stories, licence is the cursed blessing that provokes ideological questions (and culturally telling answers) about events excluded and the terms and conditions of those retained. The most pointed exclusion in *Boys* is Phillip DeVine, the young, African-American man who had been dating Lisa Lambert (renamed Candace in the film) who was killed alongside Lisa and Brandon by John Lotter and Tom Nissen in Humboldt, Nebraska in 1993 (an exclusion Peirce troublingly referred to in a National Public Radio interview as a subplot she just had no room for). But also troubling for me, alongside the putatively 'lesbian' scene, is the extravagant coherence of the film's class-cultural overlay. In *Boys*, working-class life does not cause transphobic murder, but it does overdetermine it in ways worth understanding more deeply.³

My reading of *Boys* through the lens of class representation is not born of a univocal search for so-called positive images, but I do recoil at what appears to me to be a new instalment in a long history of popular images of working-class pathology. Whatever may have been the layered circumstances of citizens in Falls Church, Nebraska, in *Boys Don't Cry* everyone is trapped by limited options in a limited place, by duplicity, by histories of violence and a lack of autonomy, by single motherhood, by numbing and underpaid work ('You don't have to be sober to weigh spinach', Lana tells Brandon), by drinking too much and thinking too little; by rosy, unrealistic images of the future; by a destructive impulsiveness and, in John's and Tom's case, a murderous rage born of its own history of psychic torture and incarceration. 'Cutting', Tom explains (displaying the self-inflicted knife wounds on his calf), 'snaps me back, lets me get a grip'.

None of these conditions is intrinsically the stuff of working-class life, and each might be as readily understood as a stereotype of some other social form, including youthful immaturity and self-destruction or a small-town, regional culture which imposes conformities at

2 Judith Halberstam 'The Brandon Teena archives', public lecture at the John Sims Center for the Arts San Francisco 10 February 2001

3 It is difficult to use the phrase 'working class' to describe the characters in *Boys* without affirming the film's class caricature. But some of the characters are portrayed working in blue-collar jobs (while others are apparently unemployed, though the narrative does not quite confirm that one way or the other) and for this and other reasons, the term is apt. To withhold it moreover, as a challenge to the film's image of class pathology, would inadvertently endorse the distinction between deserving and undeserving working-class or poor people – a distinction I want to up-end in a more critical analysis of class representation.

4 For example, when the sheriff in *Boys* suggests to Lana and her mother that everyone will be better off if Brandon just leaves town following his alleged rape by John and Tom, Lana quickly responds that everyone would be better off in fact if the sheriff were to lock up John and Tom. It is a wise retort, which expresses what characters and the audience know but what Lana and others are powerless to resist: that John and Tom are violently out of control.

5 The phrase 'condescending glamorizing' comes from Sally Munt. Introduction in Sally Munt (ed.), *Cultural Studies and the Working Class Subject to Change* (London and New York: Cassell, 2000) p. 12. In North America it is significant that with a few religious exceptions poverty is most noble in the eyes of those who are not (or are no longer) poor. With the pain and corrosion of poverty set aside, a poor background can make for noble material: indeed if a person moves into (or becomes eligible for) a position of considerable status and authority – for example in cabinet and Supreme Court confirmation hearings. In truth, I think there is human nobility in surviving poverty and millions of people routinely do so in the USA alone, without ever becoming cabinet ministers or Supreme Court justices. But when popular discourses are not condemning poverty as a personal rather than social failure, they tend to redeem it with attributions of noble modesty. Such an equation says little about poverty or inequality. I would argue, though much about the representational authority of privilege.

every turn. But dramatized together, such conditions become the very scaffolding of working-class sensibility in *Boys*, a gothic, elemental portrait of a dead-end community whose citizens are rarely able to act on their own behalf and which ends indeed in deadly events.⁴

My response to this image is not (I hope) liberal recuperation, an insistence upon a more noble portrait of thoughtful and hard-working people, among whom are a few crazy bad apples who wreak havoc and commit murder. The conditions which define life in *Boys* do exist and have provoked recognition for many viewers and critics, who (like me) might be more offended still by a 'condescending glamorizing' of working-class subversiveness amid the deprivations and cruelties of poverty, or by working-class images further burdened with the expectation of stoic grace.⁵ But the underexplored gothic image, like its flipside narrative of class transcendence that so consoles both middle-class guilt and conservative social policy, erases the human complexity of how and why people act as they do – good or bad – in conditions of privation, exclusion and rage. In *Boys*, when Brandon shows a photograph of Lana to his cousin Lonnie and asks 'isn't she pretty?', Lonnie responds 'yeah, if you like trash'. It is a moment in which the film makes explicit what it has suggested from the first few frames – a bleak landscape populated by 'white trash' (whose racialization may partly explain why there was no room for DeVine as 'subplot'). As the story unfolds, events known from the historical record become outcomes predicted by class pathology, for an audience of cultural consumers perhaps too primed for such a judgement and too attracted by its gritty and exotic brand of realism.

But that is not the whole story. Within this universe of feeling and reaction structured by lack and tinted blue by country lyrics and a protective and threatening night-time light, characters imbricate gender and class through their longings for love, acceptance and a better life. For Candace and Lana, Brandon's charm and attentiveness outweigh his ineptitude in such hypermasculine rituals as bar fights and bumper skiing. He is a different kind of man – radiant, beautiful, clear-skinned and clean, the promise of masculinity beside Tom and John, who stand instead as its scarred and mottled failures. They are condemned to prison and poverty while Brandon and Lana aspire to adventure and romantic escape, however unlikely their plan of paid karaoke. Brandon's gender passing, moreover, is anchored in a self-promoting tall tale of class status, with a father in oil and a sister in Hollywood – an erasure of his hustling and criminal evasions made plausible by his angular and unhardened, indeed his boyishly feminine, good looks. Even as Lana's mother calls him over to hold and inspect his face more closely (while Brandon and the audience hold their breath), the judgement is splendour, not duplicity, though that judgement will not save him when his passing is discovered and his shame and vulnerability redoubled by gender and class exposure.

Received by others as a young man, Brandon's 'pussy' masculinity embodies hope for romance and social mobility, and his careful observation of others' gender style becomes reflexively thoughtful, in contrast to John's brutal reactivity and Tom's cypoccat impotence. Exposed as a sex-gender trickster, however, those same qualities make him fair game for the violent re-enactment of normative gender difference and hierarchy.⁶

My interest in the articulations of class and gender in *Boys* and my anxiety about the film's supersaturated typifications of working-class fate speak to a re-entry into cultural studies of class belonging and representation. As Sally Munt has charted so clearly, cultural studies began with a leftist commitment to working-class inclusion and liberation, a commitment later challenged for its inattention to other axes of social difference and power.⁷ But in the last fifteen years or so, class cultures have been pushed to the rearground even as class difference has continued to operate and to make itself felt. Thus as a cultural studies of class renews itself, it does so conscious not only of the historical fixities of class position and the persistence of exploitation and struggle, but also of the complex trajectories of class location and identity that can occur within the life of even one person. 'We tend now', writes Cora Kaplan, 'to think of class consciousness past and present more polymorphously and perversely: its desires, its object choices, and its antagonisms are neither so straightforward nor so singular as they once seemed'.⁸ Here, Kaplan articulates the form of class analysis to which my comments on *Boys* respond, an analysis that not only connects class to (trans)gender and sexuality but also expresses the complexity and recursiveness of the category and its variants. Class cultures are produced, not least by popular representations, and complexly so, in contexts where class life is sometimes central, sometimes not, structured and structuring in critical but incomplete ways. Pressed to identify the primary representational and political terms of *Boys*, I would call the film a transgender story. Pressing further to the layered relations of any such social category takes me to the film's class character.

Thanks to Jackie Stacey and Regina Kunzel for their helpful comments

6 Brandon is also exposed for car theft and bad cheques, but he is punished for gender not cheque fraud. The criminal proceedings do lead to his exposure however and justify the accusation that he brought his fate on himself as a liar. But here too, the lie that counts is the judged disparity between his female body and masculine gender identification.

7 Munt, *Cultural Studies and the Working Class*.

8 Cora Kaplan, 'Millennial class: Introduction to a special issue: Re-reading class', *PMLA Journal*, vol. 115, no. 1 (2000), p. 13.

reviews

review:

Olivier Barlet, *African Cinemas: Decolonizing the Gaze*, trans. Chris Turner. London and New York: Zed Books, 2000, 315 pp.

ROY ARMES

First published in France in 1996, *African Cinemas. Decolonizing the Gaze* is a major contribution to the study of the cinemas of sub-Saharan Africa, and of non-western cinema in general. The book is designed, its author tells us in his introduction, as an invitation to a journey: 'a voyage to another continent, of course, but also to an inner journey' (p. viii). What is most striking and engaging about the book is the manner in which this invitation is framed. The three-part structure covers the ground which one might expect: first tracing the many contradictions in the progress from colonization to independence, then looking at the distinctive narrative structures of African films, and finally pondering on the future prospects (not least the economic prospects) of African cinemas. The plural term – African cinemas – is one key to Barlet's approach: throughout he is keen to stress the variety and diversity of Africa and its cultures. Within this broad framework displays an acute awareness of what this involves. 'Opening oneself up to a different kind of cinema is not a neutral act, since what is at stake is a questioning of one's own way of looking' (p. viii).

This is not a formal history of African cinemas and the author has no desire to chart the differing progress of, say, Senegalese cinema as opposed to Nigerian cinema. Instead, he works from a sense of 'a deep cultural specificity among the film makers of Black Africa'. 'African films show their originality, the originality of their cultural diversity, in a context in which the world is being Westernized'.

(p 29) Barlet refuses to be drawn into controversies about the authenticity (or lack of it) of specific films, such as those provoked by black American film critics about the particular trajectory of Idrissa Ouedraogo's career. Instead he looks at films for what they can tell us about the complexities of African filmmaking and contemporary African culture. Barlet's approach has indeed much in common with that of Ouedraogo, whose thoughts, in a personal interview, he quotes 'Filmmakers, who have the power to say something, feel they have an obligation to communicate a political message, whereas a filmmaker is simply someone who has a vision to exchange with others. We should give up this initial approach of wanting to be the consciousness of our peoples and assert our cinema more as the expression of our consciousness' (p 62)

The book has a rigorous structural logic. Part One, for example, deals successively with the rejection of western perspectives and an initial assertion of the primacy of indigenous culture, the search for 'authenticity' set against the continued ambiguity of relations with the West, the move towards inwardness combined with a fresh urge towards social change (particularly as exemplified by the status of women). It concludes with a new look at the problems by means of a detour through the English-speaking black diaspora. But the work itself is much richer than any straightforward thesis. Barlet, who builds his text out of a collage of precise references to specific films and quotations from the filmmakers themselves (mostly derived from personal interviews), is much more interested in complexity than in a simple and straightforward line of development. The text is full of ambiguities, typified by the situation in 1955 – at the very beginning of black African filmmaking – of the Senegalese director and critic Paulin Soumanou Vieyra. The first black African to attend the prestigious French film school, he graduated from IDHEC in Paris in 1955. He could graduate there with French help and encouragement, but then found himself banned by French law from shooting film in Africa (p 22). It is worth noting that French attitudes had reversed some forty years later – in the mid 1990s – when Ouedraogo, famed for his African stories (*Yaaba*, *Tilal* and *Samba Traoré*), shot a new feature in Lyon, French critics advised him to go back home and make 'African films' (p 211).

It is characteristic of Barlet's approach that he begins his consideration of narrative in Part Two with the concept of humour, quoting Tchicaya U Tam'si on its special role in African society 'Humour is our weapon, the weapon of the weak. The weak laugh at themselves to unsettle their opponents. Humour is a weapon' (p 129). With a well-chosen range of examples, Barlet argues his case that 'black styles of humour guide human beings in unravelling the inextricably tangled threads of their destiny' (p. 141). When he moves on to consider the role of the oral tradition in African film narratives, the insights come thick and fast. On the use of

symbolism, for example 'Symbols invade the images. These take the form of gestures, attitudes, rhythms, colours, sounds, local or western objects, rituals, and so on, combining with words – or even with proverbs. By an analogical process of reasoning, they invite the viewer to participate' (p. 143). 'Through its particular use of the spoken word, the cinema has become 'the prime means for magnifying speech, and it thereby acquires new legitimacy, as a prime vehicle perpetuating and modernizing African speech' (p. 155). It can also find 'new legitimacy by perpetuating memory' (p. 162). Barlet's approach is always positive, as for him 'the originality of films from Africa is that they respect human beings and open up an understanding of their place in the universe' (p. 146).

His approach to music, dance and song is similar: 'Dance, like laughter, is here the assertion of a resistance, of a difference, of a rejection of discipline' (p. 163), while music complements the spoken language of a film 'more actively than it does in Western cinema' (p. 186) and song 'attains to a symbolic dimension, opening up to an emotionality which is further reinforced by the music' (p. 190). Consideration of the languages used in African films gives Barlet another contradiction: 'Africa has many languages, but Africans do not read subtitles' (p. 195), and he has interesting things to say about the linguistic complexities of filmmaking in a context where a single country (like Cameroon) may have hundreds of languages, and where the only universally understood languages are those of the former colonizers.

While Parts One and Two deal with the reality of forty years of African filmmaking, Part Three looks at the dream of a truly independent, financially viable African cinema. Here even Barlet's infectious enthusiasm is challenged, as he faces the situation which the filmmakers themselves have to confront: 'If African film makers have some hopes of being seen on African screens, they are inured now to the reluctance to give them exposure in Europe. Fictional images from Africa are seldom seen' (p. 286). Yet African films are an essential part of cinematic culture: they are 'a vital alternative to the reductive representations forced on Western consciousness by the media' (p. 290) and, moreover, 'throw light on our own search for identity' (p. 288).

Barlet – as in his discussion of *Yeelen* – favours a subjective approach to the criticism of African filmmaking: 'Only personal subjectivity can attempt to perceive the deep cause of the film, its real "need to exist", not its objective genesis' (p. 213). Given this approach, it is not by chance that one chapter of *African Cinemas* is called 'Closing Your Eyes' (justified by a beautiful quote from Djibril Diop Mambety: 'I'll explain to you how to make a film: you close your eyes, you close them very, very tight . . .') (p. 80). Though this book is about looking – the French title is *Les cinémas d'Afrique noire. Le regard en question* – Barlet himself is a man of

the word, a practising journalist who is currently the editor of *Africultures*, which for the past three-and-a-half years has provided (and continues to provide) unique insight into a whole range of contemporary African cultural activity. The account of African cinemas he offers is scattered with proverbs and sayings. In his preface he cites a Yoruba saying 'Even when there are lots of them, words don't fill up a bucket' (p. ix), and he concludes with the Fulani proverb 'Men are two dirty hands. You can only wash one with the other' (p. 289).

Though he begins by telling us that 'My conclusion will be that African cinema invites us in to a genuine process of learning how to look' (p. ix), he actually concludes his book by saying 'I have now come to the end of two years spent *listening* to the cinema cultures of Black Africa' (italics mine). It is Barlet's sensitive, insightful and always eloquent combination of an awareness of the complexities of looking and an ability to listen intently that gives this book its major importance.

review:

George Faraday, *Revolt of the Filmmakers: The Struggle for Artistic Autonomy and the Fall of the Soviet Film Industry*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, 252 pp.

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The 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union and the unhealthy state of the post-Soviet economy have damaged the Russian film industry almost beyond repair. Owing to a sharp increase in production costs, the number of Russian feature films on release has dropped dramatically, from some three hundred in 1990 to around thirty in 1996. The disintegration of the distribution system, greatly assisted by the proliferation of video piracy, made the film industry unprofitable and therefore virtually excluded the possibility of private large-scale investments. Russian filmmakers barely survive on severely limited grants, provided mostly by the government, with a substantial percentage of their recently completed work shown only at international and domestic festivals, if at all. Film studios appear to be making some money by selling the broadcasting rights for the still popular old Soviet films to television stations, but this does not guarantee enough returns to revive what once was a prestigious and lucrative area of business.

According to George Faraday, who interviewed film directors, scriptwriters, critics, producers and distributors for his book, the present sordid state of affairs should in no small measure be blamed on Russian filmmakers themselves. Following their constant complaints that the ideological control of Soviet censors and Party watchdogs was creatively damaging, they leapt at the chance to take full charge of the industry when the Party began to loosen its grip on

power in 1987. However, disoriented by the influential cult of the auteur, the artists-turned-managers proved to be too remote from the demands of the average filmgoer, and failed to produce genuinely popular motion pictures which would have helped cinema to outlast numerous crises. The gap has been filled by foreign, chiefly American, productions of (often) cheap quality and wide mass appeal. These have attracted both the official distributors and the video pirates. In Russia it is not always possible to see the difference between the two.

Faraday divides Russian filmmakers into four groups (p. 174), in accordance with their strategies of survival: messianic elitists, amoral elitists, messianic populists and amoral populists. The first group consists of the artists who believe that they are on a mission to spread an important moral message, but refuse to make this message stylistically accessible (Aleksandr Sokurov belongs to this category). The second group comprises those directors, like Kira Muratova, who create art films for their own sake, not necessarily trying to make a specific moral point, and without much concern for the viewer. Amoral populists, such as the young Valery Todorovsky, aspire to entertain the public Hollywood-style, which in the present conditions amounts, at best, to the odd successful arthouse film managing to reach beyond its typical audience. Finally, messianic populists such as Nikita Mikhalkov claim that salvation lies in a new national mythmaking, that is, in the invention of a new positive hero, who would reassert the badly shaken Russian self-confidence and simultaneously solve the problem of poor cinema attendance.

Faraday seems to have rested his hopes on Mikhalkov's agenda. Not every scholar would readily agree.¹ In any case, it is hard not to notice that the four groups in question existed in the Soviet cinema long before the demise of Communism, or that the state's commanding positions in the disbursement of filmmaking grants have largely been retained. It would therefore not be too difficult for the Russian government to revert to the policy of forcing cinematographers to churn out propaganda reels in return for these grants at any time it so desired.

In his analysis of what has happened to the late Soviet/post-Soviet film industry, Faraday heavily relies on the methodology and terminology of Pierre Bourdieu (as represented in his 1993 book *Field of Cultural Production* and other publications), admitting, however, that Bourdieu's approach is not always suitable for Russian conditions (pp. 196–8). It would have probably been wiser if Faraday had refreshed his knowledge of Russian cinema instead, because the number and nature of the mistakes he makes is clearly disproportionate to his claim of establishing a diagnosis of (and perhaps even finding a cure for) the current situation. He constantly misspells the names of well-known actors, directors and films (Yarmolik instead of Yarmolnik, p. 1, Rastotsky instead of

¹ See for example Birgit Beumers 'Cinemarket, or the Russian film industry in "Mission Possible"', *Europe Asia Studies* vol. 51 no. 5 (1999) p. 893.

Rostotsky, pp 59, 62; *Gorodskoi roman/An Urban Affair* instead of *Gorodskoi romans/An Urban Song* (1971), p 64. Yoselani and Ioselani instead of Ioseliani, pp 129, 221, as well as Fyodr Bondarchuk instead of Fyodor Bondarchuk, p 227) He wrongly accuses Sergei Bondarchuk, Fyodor's father, of making a series of films that supposedly celebrated Brezhnev's exploits in World War II (pp 25, 106), presumably confusing Bondarchuk Sr with Evgeny Matveev. Moreover, it is obvious from Faraday's plot summaries that he either has not seen or has forgotten some of the films that he is writing about. Thus, he asserts that a drunken character in Eldar Ryazanov's *Ironiya sudby/The Irony of Fate* (1975) 'inadvertently takes the night train from Moscow to Leningrad' (p 98), whereas it is a plane onto which friends load the unconscious character. As for Aleksandr Mitta's disaster thriller *Ekipazh/The Aircrew* (1980), it was not 'the fleeting appearance of a bared female breast' (p. 89) but a whole naked female body, shown through a fish tank, that became one of the most memorable nude scenes in the history of Soviet cinema, because it was officially sanctioned and because there were so few of them in the first place. Faraday also misleads his readers when he states that 'the more extreme forms of russophilism found no public expression within Russian filmmaking' he is presumably unaware of Nikolai Burlyaev's biopic *Lermontov* (1986), which makes much of the fact that the patronymic of Lermontov's killer, Nikolai Martynov, was Solomonovich. The Martynov-Lermontov duel is consequently interpreted as a Jewish plot to dispose of a Russian genius. In an interview about his recently founded film school,² Burlyaev characteristically calls it the Russian Orthodox film school, which in itself implies that students of other religious denominations are not particularly welcome.

2 See Vera Eskom Khristianskaia gazeta Severa Rossii (an interview with Nikolai Burlyaev 23 May 2000) URL <http://www.mirezha.ru/vera/18/10.html> [5 August 2001]

Faraday understandably attempts to assess the transformation of the Russian film industry in the 1990s against a wider cultural background, but fails to demonstrate his competence in recent Russian cultural history, misdating such key events as the demolition of the Moscow Cathedral of Christ the Saviour (p 185, it took place in 1931, not in 1936) and Solzhenitsyn's expulsion to the West (p 230, it happened in 1974, not in 1971). He mistakenly claims that Nikita Mikhalkov's father, Sergei, was 'head of the Soviet Writers' Union' (p 186; in point of fact, he was merely one of its many secretaries and headed the Writers' Union of the RSFSR), uncritically repeats someone else's remark that Dmitry Polhansky was a 'KGB chief' (p 64), which is simply incorrect, supplies the wrong first name for the author Belov (Andrei instead of Vasily, p 181), misspells the author Tatyana Tolstaya's surname (p 228) and boldly asserts that 'Russia has no private telephone directories' (p 204, of course, it does!) Faraday's grasp of Russian is infirm: he invents non-existent words, such as *perdukha* (pp 35–6), *magnuzdat* (pp 83–4), *bordak* (p. 133), *sevodnya* (p 155), *voskreseni* (p 175).

kinemagratografi (p. 217) and even claims that the first of these is Russian for 'fart'. Meanwhile, such worthy subjects as, for instance, the Russian Federal Law on Cinema (1996) are left unattended.

To conclude, there is a visible discrepancy between the rather perplexing content of Faraday's book and its enthusiastic blurb, kindly supplied by Professor Andrew Horton of the University of Oklahoma ('Faraday's well-informed tome deserves a prominent space not only on the "film studies" shelf but on the broader "Soviet cultural studies" shelf as well, for he has brilliantly contextualized the business and art of Russian film') Personally, I would not treat this publication as a reliable academic source. It appears that the largely uncharted territory of post-Soviet Russian cinema is still waiting for suitably qualified explorers.